



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 86

APRIL 1981

No. 4

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'

आपो हि ष्ठा मयोभुवस्ता न ऊर्जे दधातन ।
महे रणाय चक्षसे ॥

1. O waters, you are verily bliss-giving (*mayobhuvah*). Give us energy and great and beautiful insight.

Rg-Veda 10.9.1

यो वः शिवतमो रसस्तस्य भाजयतेह नः ।
उशतीरिव मातरः ॥

2. In this world make us share that most sacred joy of yours, like affectionate (*uśatīh*) mothers.

Rg-Veda 10.9.2

तस्मां अरं गमाम वो यस्य क्षयाय जिन्वथ ।
आपो जनयथा च नः ॥

3. Let us quickly (*aram*) come to you for the destruction (*kṣaya*) [of sin] by which you gladden us. O waters, produce for us [all other blessings].¹

Rg-Veda 10.9.3

शं नो देवीरभिष्टय आपो भवंतु पीतये ।
शं योरभि स्रवंतु नः ॥

4. May the divine waters bless us. May they take part in this worship (*abhiṣṭaye*). [May they be good] for our drinking. May they shower blessings upon us.

Rg-Veda 10.9.4

* Four important mantras found in all the four Vedas. The first three are used as prayer-mantras for purification (*marjanam*) in the twilight devotion (*samdhya*) of the twice-born. They are also used during *pūjā* while offering specially consecrated water to the Deity. The fourth mantra is also often employed for the same purpose. 'Water' here does not mean ordinary water, which cannot be the object of such a sublime prayer. It evidently stands for the supreme creative power of the Divine, the stream of universal Existence. Thales, the father of Greek philosophy, believed water to be the ultimate Reality and the basis of life.

1. This is the first explanation of Sāyaṇa. His second explanation is naturalistic. Others have given different interpretations.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL outlines the charismatic features of the Ramakrishna Movement and its future tasks.

We are publishing the CONCLUDING SPEECH of Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, made at the final session of the Convention on 29th December 1980. It is a fervent exhortation to the members of the Ramakrishna Movement to work for the uplift of the poor and to spread the messages of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

In the second instalment of the PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD Swami Budhananda shows how from very ancient to modern times Hinduism has taught in different ways the practice of the presence of God. Spiritual aspirants will find this article very helpful.

In the first instalment of FAITH, REASON AND REALIZATION (included in 'the March issue') Swami Adiswarananda gave a lucid analysis of the various aspects of faith and reason. Now in the second instalment he shows how Vedanta harmonizes faith and reason in the background of realization.

Swami Someswarananda concludes his EARLY DAYS OF BELUR MATH, bringing to light many interesting details regarding the early years of the mother house of the Ramakrishna Order.

In the last week of December 1980 the Ramakrishna Math and Mission organized its second general convention. In THE CONVENTION Swami Atmarupananda of the editorial staff of this journal gives a vivid personal account of this mammoth function recapturing its solemnity and the participants' elevated mood.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT: AN OVERVIEW—II

EDITORIAL

Religious movements are of two types: proselytizing and charismatic. A proselytizing religion only seeks to convert people *yena kenāpi upāyena* (by some means or other) to its fold. Its aim is only to swell its numbers by destroying other faiths. It has only one dimension: the quantitative. On the contrary, a charismatic movement impresses itself upon the hearts of people by the sheer beauty of its message. Its aim is not the destruction of other faiths but their transformation into a means for spiritual enlightenment and freedom from ignorance and sorrow. Its dimension is qualitative and, since quality covers a wide range of values, a charismatic religion can influence, inspire and guide people in innumerable ways.

The Ramakrishna Movement belongs to the second category. Slowly, silently, but in an enduring way its influence has been spreading across the globe, and it has become one of the most significant religious movements in modern times. The fact that Dr. Edmund Davison Soper, an eminent Protestant theologian, has singled out the Ramakrishna Mission for a trenchant critical evaluation in his famous book is evidence of the importance that the Movement has assumed in the contemporary world.¹ What are the charismas that have contributed to the Movement's appeal and influence?

1. Edmund Davison Soper, *The Inevitable Choice* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 13, 20 and *passim*.

Charismatic features of the Ramakrishna Movement

1. *Emphasis on direct spiritual experience.* The Ramakrishna Movement is basically a spiritual movement started with the primary objective of awakening the spiritual consciousness of man. Its cardinal tenet is, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be.'² Direct realization of the Self or God is the only true test and criterion of religion, and what the Movement does is to make this possible for a large number of people.

In India the Ramakrishna Movement is popularly associated with social service. The Movement no doubt undertakes service activities on an extensive scale. But these are not regarded as an end in themselves. However important these are, they are only a means for the attainment of spiritual fulfilment. The central point of Vedānta is the supremacy of the Spirit and that there is only a spiritual solution to the problems of life. The entire outlook and activity of the Movement are based on this principle.

2. *Emphasis on purity.* Another noteworthy feature of the Ramakrishna Movement is the great importance it attaches to purity and unselfishness. It does not believe in miracle mongering, yogic feats or fakirism. It believes that genuine spiritual fulfilment cannot be attained without purity of character. 'Religions of the world have become grim mockeries. What the world wants is character,' said Swami Vivekananda. Religion becomes a means of higher fulfilment only when it is built on the foundation of character.

A pure character cannot be built without renunciation—renunciation of 'lust and

greed'. This ever-repeated teaching of Sri Ramakrishna forms the keynote of the whole Movement. The root cause of all the troubles in this world can be traced to the two evils of lust and greed. Therefore the Movement gives great importance to the renunciation of these in the lives of its members, monks and laity alike. Renunciation need not take the negative form of retiring to a cave or a forest. It can be practised through charity and service. To plough back into society all that is in excess of the maintenance needs of an individual or a monastery—this is the positive way of practising renunciation followed in the Ramakrishna Movement. Renunciation and service are two sides of the same coin. This is what Swamiji means when he says that renunciation and service are the national ideals of India.

3. *Symbol of unity in Hinduism.* The Ramakrishna Movement stands as a non-sectarian, non-communal, progressive trend in Hinduism as a whole. Most of the modern reform movements and institutions accept only certain aspects of Hindu religion and culture. Some of them reject many of the philosophical doctrines of Hinduism while others reject its primordial symbols, myths, beliefs, customs, rituals and practices. The Ramakrishna Movement accepts all that is best in Hinduism. As regards the goal, it accepts the various conceptions of the ultimate Reality, all gods and goddesses and Avatars. Secondly, it accepts all the different paths to that Reality—Karma, Yoga, Bhakti, Jñāna. Further, in the social field, it accepts all people without the distinctions of caste, creed, race or sex. It is the first and the most important movement of the present century actively working for the solidarity and rejuvenation of the whole of Hinduism under the banner of Vedānta.

4. *Symbol of religious harmony.* The Ramakrishna Movement has attracted worldwide attention for its workable message of establishing harmony among all religions on

² *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), vol. 2, p. 396.

the basis of equality. It advocates not mere tolerance of different religions but their mutual acceptance and sharing. Instead of attempting religious syncretism it recognizes the truth that every great scripture is valid in its own field, that every religion is a pathway to God and that, in spite of their differences, religions of the world have some common fundamentals. This attitude of acceptance characteristic of the Movement has been clearly stated by Swami Vivekananda. 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.'³

5. *Enduring dynamism.* The Ramakrishna Movement is one of the most active and dynamic religious movements of this century. It is growing fast in India and is active in the West. In recent years a number of religious institutions and organizations have sprung up and are exercising considerable influence all over the world. An important factor that distinguishes the Ramakrishna Movement from them is its long-range vision. It is built to last centuries. It produces an impression of permanence. Its present activities are looked upon only as laying the foundation of a mighty religious revival which will gain momentum through future decades.

6. *Positive outlook.* An impartial study of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā* and the great epics shows that the Hindu outlook on life was, originally, one of acceptance and participation and openness to the natural world. Escapism, selfishness and weakness crept into it only during the Middle Ages when the nation lost its political sovereignty and social cohesion. With the new political awakening Hindu society is slowly recovering its positive outlook.

One of the great tasks that Swami Vivek-

ananda set himself to was to convert Vedānta, long regarded as transcendental and world-negating, into a pragmatic and positivist philosophy. How did he achieve it? Through reinterpretation and differential emphasis on doctrines. Māyā theory was played down and the immanence of Brahman was stressed. Ātman as the witness was also shown to be the source of all power, glory and perfection. Sectarian divergences were ignored and unity in diversity was emphasized. Dualism, Qualified Monism and Nondualism were taken as stages of one integral experience. Advaita as a transcendental experience was extended into the empirical world to stand for unity (*ekatva*). Sin was interpreted as ignorance. Jñāna was harmonized with modern science. Bhakti or love of God was expanded to include love of man. Direct experience was stressed more than scriptural revelation. The distinction between the sacred and the secular in the field of work was abolished and Karma-yoga was accepted as a direct means to realization. All teleological striving was shown to be a part of the ultimate struggle for *mokṣa* or liberation. Morality was interpreted as selflessness, and selflessness as divine life. Education was looked upon as manifestation of the perfection already in man, and religion as manifestation of the divinity already in man. Strength, fearlessness and cheerfulness were shown to be signs of spirituality. The result of all this chiselling was to give a new profile to Vedānta, often called Neo-Vedānta. This is the philosophy of the Ramakrishna Movement. It has great adaptability and capacity to absorb diverse ideas.

7. *Modernity.* Another charismatic feature of the Movement is modernity. The parables of Sri Ramakrishna and the lucid expositions of Swami Vivekananda have brought the highest teachings of Vedānta within the reach of the common man. Popularization of scriptures in the regional languages is an important part of

3. Ibid., vol. 1 (1977), p. 24.

the Movement's work. Adaptation to modern times has necessitated several changes in monasticism. Mendicancy, asceticism and Guru-cult have given way to social service and centrally administered coenobitic life. The Ashramas and temples of the Movement are clean and airy and have modern amenities. All activities are marked by decorum, punctuality and efficiency. The monks follow the current social norms in food, clothing, work, social etiquette, etc. These changes have facilitated the integration of monasticism into modern society and have enhanced the mobility of the Movement, its social contact and the diffusion of its ideals without lowering the dignity of Sannyāsa or violating the fundamental values of the monastic vocation.

8. *Community support.* There is not only a close understanding and cooperation between the monks and the laity of the Ramakrishna Movement but also the recognition of their belonging to a single spiritual family. It is not mere faith in a common ideal that unites the members of this ever-enlarging family but a bond of selfless love. This familial pattern of relationship was established by Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi in their lifetime, and is being maintained as a living tradition. It is also believed to endure beyond the grave. Thus the Movement does the function of the Church without actually becoming one. It gives to its members community support, a sense of identity and spiritual security, and thereby enables them to face with confidence the uncertainties of this world and the next. In this the Guru-disciple relationship plays an important role.

9. *Social commitment.* An important charismatic feature of the Ramakrishna Movement which has won the confidence of the people and the Government of India is its social commitment. The monks and devotees take an active interest in the social welfare of the country. The Movement's

social commitment has the following distinctive features.

One is the creation of a new work ethic. Hindu spirituality had looked down upon karma (work) as an expendable preliminary, and traditional Sannyāsins had considered themselves above this need. The orthodox among them looked askance at the Mission Sādhus working in their newly started hospitals, and sometimes taunted them by calling them *bhaṅgi sādhus* ('sweeper monks'). The Ramakrishna Movement has raised karma to the level of worship—worship of God in man. Further, the new work ethic looks upon work as a means of manifesting the potential divinity of the worker, and this means the divinization of all secular activities.

The second aspect of the Movement's social commitment is its focus on the masses. Swami Vivekananda was the first great leader of modern India to speak for the sunken millions and organize social service for them. Uplift of the masses has always been the chief concern of the Ramakrishna Movement.

The third aspect of the Movement's social commitment is its attitude towards caste—a vital issue in India. The peculiar ethos of Hindu society is such that any attempt to destroy caste will only add one more caste to the already existing ones! The Ramakrishna Movement does not maintain caste or racial distinctions within its fold, but it does not openly denounce caste, for the problem of caste is a very complex one and denunciation of it alone will not solve it. Its idea of creating a casteless society is not by 'levelling down' but by 'levelling up'—not by pulling down those who are already high up, but by raising those who are low to higher levels of culture. The original meaning of the Brahmin ideal was the creation of a community of spiritual men, and what the Movement does is to make this ideal practicable for all people.

The fourth aspect of the Movement's social commitment is its complete aloofness from politics. During India's freedom struggle when the Ramakrishna Mission discreetly kept away from all political activities, many of its well-wishers feared this might damage its future interests. On the contrary, this only brightened its image as a spiritual organization beyond the limitations of narrow human vision. In the murky, turbulent atmosphere of present-day politics this policy has become all the more important.

10. *Guidance of holy men.* Finally it should be remembered that no doctrine however noble, no theory however convincing, can give an organization the bread of life to satisfy the spiritual hunger of thousands of people for a long time. Only holy spiritual men can do that. They are the real source of the charisma and power of a religious movement. There is hardly any doubt that the secret of success of the Ramakrishna Movement lies in the large number of spiritually illumined souls that it has produced. The spiritual force liberated by Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples has been preserved as a living tradition by a number of truly holy and spiritual men—both monastic and lay.

All the charismatic features discussed above may not equally apply to all the streams of the Movement. But they give a general idea of the nature of the Movement.

Contributions of the Ramakrishna Movement

What are the contributions of the Ramakrishna Movement to modern India and world thought? What part has it played in human development? What are its influences on present-day society? These are difficult questions to answer for we are too close to contemporary history to make a proper assessment. There are now too many religious bodies working on similar

lines, and only after the lapse of more time can the work of the Movement be properly evaluated.

The contributions of the Ramakrishna Movement may be divided into two groups: those made to Indian society and Hindu religion, and those made to world thought.

The material contribution made by the Movement to Indian society is enormous and has been widely recognized by the people and the Government. The hospitals, dispensaries, schools, colleges, hostels and cultural centres run by the Movement minister to the needs of thousands of people every year. Apart from this, the Movement undertakes extensive relief operations all over the country during times of famine, floods, drought, riots, epidemics and other calamities which constantly recur in this country. Crores and crores of rupees' worth of aid has reached millions of people through the Movement's ever-open channels.

The influence of the Movement on the evolution of modern Indian society and Hindu religion is less obvious. The stupendous freedom struggle and the subsequent turmoils and the strong influence of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian political thought have considerably distorted the perspectives. Future historians will, however, give credit to the Movement at least for the following contributions, as many thoughtful people have already done. The most important contribution of the Movement is to the spiritual renaissance of India which enabled the nation to face the challenge of Western culture. An indirect effect of this was the adding of a spiritual dimension to India's political awakening and the influence on some of the radical leaders like Sri Aurobindo and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. But for the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics, this influence would surely have been very considerable and decisive and would have produced a different, and perhaps less unfortunate, political climate.

The second contribution of the Movement is to the unification of Hindu religion by bringing out its common bases, separating the essentials from non-essentials, and by adapting it to modern thought. Not many people are aware that what is now known to the world as Vedānta is really Neo-Vedānta which is essentially the creation of Swami Vivekananda. Thirdly, the Movement has given to Hindus a sense of mission. Another contribution is the reorientation of Hindu monasticism by integrating it into the stream of social life. Lastly, a significant achievement of the Movement is the development of a work ethic by applying in practical life the Vedāntic doctrines of the potential divinity of man and the immanence of God. This work ethic converts all work into worship and service of man into service of God.

As regards the Ramakrishna Movement's influence on world thought,⁴ mention should first of all be made to the important role it played in the spiritual awakening of the West. It awakened the Western mind to three truths: the goal of life is not sense-enjoyment but Self-realization; religion is a means of getting supersensuous perception; man is not a born sinner but potentially divine. Directly or indirectly the Movement has enabled thousands of people in the West to live a spiritual life and attain higher fulfilment. It has enabled at least an equal number of people to find the true light of the Spirit in their own religion.

Secondly, the Movement has had a considerable impact on Western religious thought—both Catholic and Protestant. This has led to a great deal of rethinking on fundamental doctrines of Christian theology and mission. The Movement has

brought the East and the West closer together and has laid the foundation of a universal religion which recognizes the validity of all religions.

A third area of influence is philosophy. Though orientalist had earlier introduced Indian philosophical works to Western scholars, it was the Movement which first popularized Yoga and Vedānta among the common people and creative thinkers and writers. Its reinterpretation of religion has prepared the ground for the meeting of religion and science on equal terms. Neo-Vedānta and Practical Vedānta may in due course turn out to be the believing world's only answer to the challenge of Marxism.

These contributions may not appear to be spectacular and, in contrast to the explosive rise to popularity and activity of some of the modern organizations (though most of them have not attained the status of a 'movement'), the progress of the Ramakrishna Movement may not appear to be rapid and wide enough to become a global movement of consequence. On this point we can do no better than quote the words of Swami Vivekananda: 'Through fanaticism and bigotry a religion can be propagated very quickly, no doubt. But the preaching of that religion is firm-based on solid ground, which gives everyone liberty to his opinions and thus uplifts him to a higher path, though this process is slow.'⁵

Future perspectives

All institutions are subject to socio-economic forces and undergo growth and decay according to the laws of history. Even a religious movement started by an Avatar is a part of human society and cannot altogether remain insulated from these forces. As in individual life so also in collective life divine grace works in harmony with Karma according to the unknown laws of

4. By 'world thought' we mean the Judaeo-Christian thought of the West. Islam and Communism being totally impervious to any external noetic influence, must be left out of consideration for the time being.

5. *Complete Works*, vol. 5 (1973), p. 367,

the spiritual world. The future of the Movement therefore remains largely unknown.

However, it is important to remember one point: history teaches us that a culture or a movement decays more because of inner failure than because of external attack. The causes of internal failure may be many, all of which may not be foreseeable. But some are, and these can be detected early and remedied.

What are the immediate tasks before the Movement? The most important of these is to secure the mass base. A movement cannot become strong or survive long if it is supported only by the middle class and the rich. Strength always lies with the poor masses and they alone can give strength to the Movement. The middle class is an unstable hotbed of trouble and hence not dependable. It is the masses which give stability. Therefore, the Movement must spread out deep into its lower strata of society.

At present the Movement is trying to meet the physical needs of the poor like food, clothes, health care, etc. Nobody can deny that this form of service deserves top-most priority and has won social acceptance for the Movement. But the poor people need religion too. Their problems cannot be completely solved by temporary means. The ultimate solution lies in changing their basic attitudes. For this the poor need ideas and the support of an organization. If religious ideas and religious organizations do not fulfil this equally urgent need, Marxist ideas and the Communist Party will step in, as they have already done in several parts of the country. The Christian Churches in India have also recently become aware of this situation and are planning their strategy accordingly.⁶

6. This situation is not confined to India alone but is prevalent in all underdeveloped countries. In the Latin American countries, for instance, the Christian clergy are evolving a 'liberation theology' and have started identifying

The poor masses will accept a religion only when they are convinced that it will give them security and prosperity—only when they feel, 'Here is the message which can uplift us; herein lies our hope of salvation.' This was what made millions of them accept Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. And this was precisely what Swami Vivekananda wanted Vedānta to become—a message of hope, solace and strength to the poor and the downtrodden. 'These conceptions of Vedānta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish ...'⁷ Exhortations like this issue forth like thunderbolts from the pages of his 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora' and his famous letters to his Indian disciples.

It is clear from the works of Swamiji that he anticipated a spiritual revolution would overtake the country, like the great social upheavals that followed the advent of Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and Caitanya. When Nityānanda opened the doors of Caitanya's life-giving message to the masses, in rushed millions of poor people—peasants, blacksmiths, weavers, cobblers, beggars, prostitutes, all those neglected children of God. Swami Vivekananda too dreamed of such a mass uplift. It is for the Movement to fulfil that great prophet's dream.

Religion can be communicated only through living contact. It is not enough to dole out food and medicine from a high pedestal to the poor, however important it is. Books and lectures are not enough, however important they are. We need people who can live and work with the poor and

Christianity with the poor in an effort to counteract the insidious effects of the Marxist ideology on the masses.

7. *Complete Works*, vol. 3 (1973), p. 245.

the downtrodden and transmit the fire of Vedānta into their hearts. This is the most important task before the Ramakrishna Movement.

The second task is to develop a mass philosophy like Sarvodaya or Gandhian economics. Swami Vivekananda used the term 'Practical Vedānta' in two senses. One is that the truths of Vedānta like Ātman, Brahman, etc. are not mere theories or matters of faith (as the Christian creed is) but can actually be experienced through direct perception. The goal of this 'practicable Vedānta' is *nirhreyasa* or *mukti* (liberation). This was the interpretation that Swamiji emphasized in the West. In India he stressed more the second sense of Practical Vedānta. This is that Vedāntic truths of Ātman, Brahman, etc. can be applied in ordinary day-to-day life to solve the socio-economic problems of the individual and society. The goal of this 'Vedānta in practical life' is *abhyudaya* (material prosperity). Swamiji's ideas in this second field of Vedānta lie scattered in his works. These are to be woven into a philosophy of work meant for all people. The Movement has a work ethic in the doctrines 'work is worship' and 'Jīva is Śiva'—but this has not yet been expanded into a comprehensive philosophy of work.

There are two reasons why a new philosophy of work has become an urgent necessity. One is the breakdown of the Western work ethic. All the material prosperity of the West is based on the pleasure-seeking, machine-oriented, competitive, utilitarian work ethic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸ This

is being rejected by the modern generation as dehumanizing and self-alienating. The second reason is the need to meet the challenge of the Marxist philosophy of work. In spite of its sinister materialistic basis, negation of the Spirit and the rejection of traditional values, Marxism offers a comprehensive philosophy of work which eliminates economic competition, integrates the individual into society and unites the social, economic and political fields of activity. Above all, it tries to find a solution to the problem of alienation by making labour a means of self-realization.⁹ Directly or indirectly this philosophy has deeply influenced socio-economic thinking in all countries.

The important point is that an alternative philosophy of work which satisfies the needs of the modern man has not been developed. Work has now become an unavoidable necessity and a problem. The world is waiting for a proper philosophy of work. It was the belief of Swami Vivekananda that Vedānta could provide the basis for such a philosophy. In order to understand the deep significance of Swamiji's ideas in this field one should be well grounded not only in Indian thought but also in Western philosophy, sociology, economics, and above all must have a clear understanding and perspective of history. There is a great need to study the views of Swamiji on work and socio-economic life on a research basis and interpret them in terms of modern concepts.

The third task before the Movement is to intensify the spiritual life of its members. Buddhism started declining in India only when it lost its spiritual roots and was reduced to an intellectual structure which Śaṅkarācārya toppled. The present crisis in Christianity is at least partly caused by the

8. Owing to limitations of space we have barely touched upon this important theme here. For a detailed study see Erich Fromm, *To Have or To be?* (New York; Harper Row, 1976); Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1964); Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969).

9. See Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1961); Adam Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

anti-mystical policies of churches and monasteries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the consequent break in spiritual tradition. Contemplation and mystical life are very much necessary to maintain the spiritual vigour of a Movement. Purity, morality and goodness are not ends in themselves. These must lead man to the light of the Spirit and make him a channel for the flow of spiritual power to others. The more such spiritual men a movement produces, the stronger it is and the longer it lives. When the springs of spiritual life dry up, a movement becomes a relic of the past.

Another task before the Ramakrishna Movement is the integration of its different branch streams. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'There should be a perfect balance between monastics and householders.'¹⁰ It is well-known that the main cause for the disappearance of Buddhism from India was the concentration of power in monasticism and the destruction of that base by the Turks who invaded the country in the eleventh century. A religious movement becomes well established only when its power base shifts from monasticism to the laity. It is the decentralization of religious authority that has given Hinduism great absorbing power and the ability to withstand innumerable shocks.

Yet another need for the Movement is the integration of local cultures into it. The Ramakrishna Movement is attempting to cover a vast range of humanity by accommodating a large number of creeds, castes, races, religions and customs in its bosom. For this it is necessary that it should adapt itself to local cultures in India and the West. This is the only way to help people belonging to different cultures find meaning in the Movement's ideals.

The Ramakrishna Movement has an important role to play in bringing the religions of the world closer together. The Movement venerates all the great religious teachers and enriches itself by accepting the best elements of different religious traditions. It is now necessary to take active steps for the establishment of harmony among religions and their followers. This is a much needed service in India which is constantly rocked by communal violence. There are three approaches to inter-religious understanding. One is the so-called functional approach followed by sociologists—an objective study of a religion without projecting any personal opinion into it. The second is to see other religions through the eyes of one's own religion. The third approach is to see other religions through the eyes of their best followers. It is good to have a respectful Hindu view of Christ but it is also necessary to understand and appreciate the Christian view of Christ and the Muslim's view of Islam. This was what Sri Ramakrishna taught. Inter-religious understanding is possible only by following this path.

We finally come to another important task before the Movement: to strengthen its global mission. A nation which stops communicating and sharing with other nations will remain stunted in growth. This was what happened to India and Japan during the Middle Ages. This applies to religions and religious movements also. They must constantly keep in contact with world thought, contribute to it, adapt themselves to its changes, and share their riches with all people. Swami Vivekananda went to the West with the promise of keeping bright the light of Vedānta there. It is the duty of the Movement to honour Swamiji's global commitments.

Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda have bequeathed to the Ramakrishna Movement some of the greatest

¹⁰. *Complete Works*, vol. 8 (1977), pp. 89 and 267.

ideals of the present Age which form the nursery of future humanity's faith. If developed to their full universal dimension, these ideals could convert the Movement into a single global community 'in which the whole humanity finds its spiritual home' —*yatra viśvaṁ bhavati-eka nīdam*.¹¹

(Concluded)

¹¹. S. *Yajur-Veda* 32.8. Also *Mahānarayano-panisad* 1.14.,

CONCLUDING SPEECH OF SRIMAT SWAMI VIRESWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

AT THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
CONVENTION 1980

We are now at the concluding part of our Convention. We have been listening for the last few days to the lectures delivered by learned persons on the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji, and how their ideas are to be applied in our country and the outside world. What is it that we have learnt? What I have understood, I would like to put in a few words. We have come to know—of course, we knew it before also—that Sri Ramakrishna's message is unique. We have become convinced of this. It is not only unique; it is destined to usher in a new order of society all over the world, which shows that his message is not only for India, but for the whole world. And, therefore, it is incumbent on all of us, all the members of the Sangha, to live up to these great ideals and to help others to live up to these ideals. We should try to propagate these ennobling ideals all over India, in every nook and corner of it, as well as outside India. Now let us disperse from this holy spot with the resolve to propagate the message the Convention has given us, so that everyone comes to hear of it, to learn all this happy news.

Next, we have come to know that in our society there are various shortcomings which have to be cleansed—ethically, morally, and in every other way—if we are to become a great nation again. In this field I think ladies can probably do much better than men. They can organize themselves against all these social evils and inequities, such as the practice of untouchability, the dowry system, the question of orphans, and so on. Why should you go in for big orphanages, where you huddle together some three hundred or four hundred orphans? Can you not try to find out a parent for one or two children? There are so many well-to-do people who have no children. Can they not take care of one or two children and help them to grow up and give them education? That will be better than the orphanage, because in the orphanage they will not get that touch of homeliness and parental affection, which they will get if the childless parents take care of them. Ladies can find out such people in society and request them to take care of one or two orphans. If you can do that, it will be a noble act. I told this to the Sarada Sangha members at Calcutta.

The next point is that the real India lives in villages. Unless the tribal and the backward people are given a lift, not only economically but culturally and spiritually, there is no hope for India. The poverty of the backward classes is appalling. They

perhaps take some food today, a morsel of food, not sufficient to fill their stomach, but they are not sure that tomorrow they will get another morsel. That is their condition. And there are many other problems connected with this that should concern us, like hygiene, health, drinking water, economic development. All these and so many other pressing problems are there to be solved.

I am not here to give you plans to tackle all these problems. You can get help from the government departments or some rich people. We have taken help from the fishery department for the cultivation of fish in the Hooghly District in West Bengal, and so also in Andhra Pradesh for relief work in Rayalaseema. You also will be able to get help from them, if you work. The question is not so much about the plan; it is the question of dedicated workers. The difficulties and conditions of the backward people must be given priority, national priority, and one and all of us should try to do our best to improve their lot. That is very essential. So I hope all of you who are here today will try when you go back to implement all these plans in your life, individually and also collectively through small associations.

I just give you an example. Our Nattarampalli Swami has arranged for some doctors from Madras, a group of dentists to visit that village. They have gone there and examined all the children and their teeth, and they will be going there periodically to examine them. Now the Swami says he is trying to get some eye specialists to go and examine the eyes of the children, so that for want of adequate nutrition they won't become blind. I am just giving you one example, but I am not giving you any plan. If all of you try to improve and do something for others, then it will be easy to rebuild India. I hope you will not disappoint Swamiji. He had so much hope in all of you, and I hope you will gladly undertake the task bequeathed to the nation by

him and see that his hopes are fulfilled. Swamiji said:

I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now this minute to the temple of Parthasarathi, and before Him, who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokula, who never shrank to embrace the Pariah Guhaka, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His incarnation as Buddha—yea, down on your faces before Him, and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, the oppressed. Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day. [*Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 16-17.]

I wish that all of us—now that the Convention is over—make it a point to carry out these three things at least, the social reform, the spreading of Swamiji's and Thakur's message. Spreading Thakur's message—that itself will bring merit. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, he who reads the *Gītā*, or reads the *Gītā* to others, gets merit. Similarly, here also he who reads the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, or reads it for others, makes others come to know of it and makes them read it, he also gets merit from such acts.

Make it a point to spread the message all over India first and then everywhere, as I told you. Remove all these various meaningless handicaps retarding the progress of our society, particularly untouchability. It is meaningless. We talk of Vedanta and then say, 'Don't enter into my house; I won't drink water from your hand.' What is all this? Sheer madness. Nonsense.

Try to improve the living conditions of the poor, their environment, to begin with. Of course, they may not be very clean; they may be dirty. Try to improve their lot. I sincerely believe it can be done. Try to teach them how to improve themselves and be clean and neat. You can do that by

means of movie pictures. You can show them movie pictures on culture, hygiene and health, so that they can imbibe all these ideas. It is quite possible.

So I request you all to make it a point to help others. Helping others makes us happy. It is not what we do for ourselves that makes us happy, but when we are able to help another and make him happy; and this happiness is much more than what we can get ourselves from our selfish actions.

Please remember my words at this concluding session. Then your coming to the Convention has a meaning; then this Convention has a meaning. Otherwise, simply hearing some lectures, just some fiery words, takes us nowhere. One young man went to hear a lecture and came back and told me: 'Well, Swamiji, I heard a very fine lecture; very beautiful lecture.' When asked, 'What did he say?' he replied, 'Oh, that I don't know.' Have these lectures focussed your attention on our social problems? Have the basic spiritual issues been brought to your notice? What exactly are we expected to do? I hope you will follow this advice and follow what has come from various people in their speeches as your guidance.

The question now is, are you praying for a Convention again? That is true. We must have Conventions again and again. But I will say, before going in for another Convention, we would like to watch and study what has been the impact and result of this Convention on the country. Has it been fruitful? Has it improved in any way our social and economic conditions? Has our

Sangha been able to do something to improve the lot of the country? If the answer is in the affirmative, then certainly there will be the necessity to hold another Convention as early as possible; otherwise, simply holding Conventions is meaningless. You know the difficulties. Just now the Secretary, Swami Lokeswarananda, told us how hard he had to work. A Convention means so much money and so much labour. Of course, money may be collected because you may be able to give money, but labour? For the last six months, many of our Centres were out of gear because we had to take some of their monastic hands and keep them in the Convention office here. That cannot be done frequently, unless we have some positive gains in other directions. Then there will be a real interest to organize the next Convention.

Lastly, I appeal to you to make it possible yourselves to hold another Convention by your success in carrying out Swamiji's and Thakur's message and by your work among the backward people. I hope you will be able to do that and force the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission authorities to hold the next Convention as early as possible. Now it is time for departing. I pray to Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji that you will not only reach home safely, but that, wherever you be in future, maybe on the top of the mountain or at the bottom of the ocean, or in the jungle, or in the city, wherever you may be, I pray to Them to take care of you all. That is my earnest prayer to Them.

PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

3

It may not be common knowledge, but practice of the presence of God has been a perfected spiritual method in the Indian tradition from very ancient times up to the present.

In the Vedic hymns deities were addressed as though they were round the corner, and they were offered food and drink as one would to respected friends visiting the house. In one Rg-Vedic hymn addressed to Agni (or Fire) it is said:

O Agni, like a father to his son, be thou of easy access to us: be with us for our welfare.²³

In another hymn addressed to Indra it is said :

O Indra invoked by many ! We are yours ; we have cultivated our intellect only for you ; other than you, O Indra, there is none that gives happiness. From this ignorance, craving and reproach, free us, O Indra ; by your assistance and wonderful course of action, teach us ; you are powerful and you know how to do it.²⁴

Later on in the Upaniṣads cultivation of the presence of deities reached its consummation when the supreme fact of reality, the identity of the soul with the supreme Spirit, of the Ātman with Brahman was discovered. It was, however, only those who transcended their body-consciousness that could practise this approach to reality. For the vast majority of the spiritual seekers who cannot transcend body-consciousness, a

personal approach to a personal God will always remain the only opening to spiritual life. Hence we find in the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa laying great emphasis on the need of a personal approach to God. In his own way Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasizes the practice of the presence of God through five general methods:

(1) First comes the concept of God. How should we look on God? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

He should be looked upon as the goal, the support, the abode, the refuge, the friend, the origin, dissolution, foundation, the treasure house and imperishable origin.²⁵

In short, God should be looked upon as everything on which one's existence depends and destiny is bound to.

(2) In the second place Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches the ways of *ekā bhakti* (single-minded devotion) and *ananyascitta paryupāsana* (unswerving worship).

(3) Śrī Kṛṣṇa also teaches the way of consecrated living, which means doing everything as an offering unto the Lord:

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, do it as an offering to the Lord.²⁶

(4) Another method is taught in the words: "Take refuge in the Lord in all

२५. गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।
प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ॥

Bhagavad-Gītā 9.18

२६. यत्करोषि यदश्नासि ददसि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

Bhagavad-Gītā 9.27

23. *Rg-Veda* 1.1.9.

24. *Rg-Veda* 8.55.13-14, quoted from V. Raghavan, *The Indian Heritage* (Bangalore: The Indian Institute of World Culture, 1963), pp. 1, 7.

possible ways,' and 'Become an instrument in the Lord's hand.'²⁷

(5) And finally: Abandon all formalities of religion and *sink in the Lord in a mighty act of self-resignation*.²⁸ Do not regret, be not afraid of anything. The Lord will definitely save you and uphold you.

As far as religious thinking and practices go, Hindus have always been a practical people. While the practice of the Presence of God was to be the keynote of all devotional exercises, or even of everything we as spiritual aspirants do, Hindus thought there could be more than a one-track approach to God.

In the path of devotion the most important thing is to fix our emotional relationship to God. It is the most intimate, sacred relationship man could ever have. But that need not necessarily be of one type alone. It could be of various types: such as that of parents to the child; of the child to parents; of a friend to a friend; of a servant to the Master; of the serene attitude of a sage to the Lord; and of a sweetheart to a beloved. Hindus thought that the cultivation of one of these attitudes to the Lord was very important. *The attitude is the channel through which love has to be induced to flow toward God.* Hence the attitude has to be kept to oneself. When the devotee has attained fixity in the type of love he likes to cherish for God, it becomes easier to cultivate the presence of God.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa was God incarnate on earth. His foster-mother Yasodā, though not completely unaware of his divinity—for she had seen astounding things—was so firmly grounded in her mother's attitude to Baby Kṛṣṇa that she would think if she did not

look after him, how could this little child look after himself? And yet, in fact Kṛṣṇa was God Himself. Kṛṣṇa's boyhood friends, Sudāmā and others, looked upon him as their pal. They did not hesitate to have a bite in a fruit and give it to Kṛṣṇa for another. Arjuna, though aware of Kṛṣṇa's divinity, mixed with him in friendly familiarity until at Kurukṣetra he was vouchsafed a vision, the Lord's staggering cosmic form.

Then there were sages like Bhīṣma who had the serene attitude to the Lord, knowing here was God going about in the world, the soul of their soul. Their conviction about the Lord's divinity was so firm that they made no fuss about it.

The Gopīs cultivated the attitude of the sweetheart to Kṛṣṇa, which is considered to be the most compelling attitude in as much as it, so to say, swallows up the person who cultivates it. The Gopīs forgot everything for the sake of Kṛṣṇa, their homes, duties, husbands, children and all. They were so much devoured by the thought of Kṛṣṇa that a time came when they began to think of themselves as Kṛṣṇa. When this love, which consumes everything else in our awareness, is given to God, God alone stays, everything else vanishes.

Another fruitful attitude that is very helpful and sweet, is the child's attitude to the mother. Sri Ramakrishna cultivated all the five attitudes for realizing God, but he preferentially settled on the child's attitude to his Mother for cultivating constant communion with the Divine. His way of cultivating the presence of God was that he knew nothing but his Mother. In the beginning, in the reality of his spiritual life, there was but this one accent—the overpowering and all-absorbing feeling that he was the child of the Mother. He cried and cried and pressed his demand for Her vision so hard that Mother found it hard to stay away. His eyes became winkless, in expectation of Her vision. He did not sleep

27. तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

and निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥

Bhagavad-Gītā 18.62 and 11.33

28. सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

Bhagavad-Gītā 18.66

for six long years. When the living presence of the Mother became the most abiding thing with him, he depended on the Mother for everything. When he had doubts he asked the Mother for an answer. He became just like a little child. If anyone caused him pain, he took his wound to the Mother and was soon redressed.

For Sri Ramakrishna, Kālī the Divine Mother was so vividly real that he constantly conversed with Her, took Her guidance and counsel. He did not do a thing Mother did not want him to do. One day while he was quietly sitting in the temple garden, there came in a tall, sturdy wandering monk. He was in fact an illumined soul, who had himself experienced the truth of nondualistic Vedānta, that Ātman is Brahman. His name was Totapuri. This great soul was struck by Sri Ramakrishna's radiant appearance, for his very looks were unlike those of ordinary people. He asked him if he would like to practise the disciplines of Vedānta. Sri Ramakrishna said that he did not know but his Mother did. 'Then go and ask your mother,' said Totapuri, who thought Sri Ramakrishna wanted to seek his mother's permission. After sometime Sri Ramakrishna emerged from the temple and reported that Mother had given Her assent and had said that it was for this purpose only that Totapuri happened to come there. Sri Ramakrishna in fact asked the deity in the temple and got the Divine Mother's spoken reply and permission.

Narendranath had a scientific mind and he demanded proof of all spiritual phenomena before he would believe them. He tested Sri Ramakrishna before he believed his words. A forceful and sometimes even fierce critic of spiritual doctrines and claims, sometimes he succeeded in creating doubts in Sri Ramakrishna's mind. On such occasions the Master went to the Mother in the temple and said: 'Mother, Narendra says this about my experience. What do you say?' And he

would return with a face lighted by a smile to say: 'You fool, Mother says, "What does Narendra know!"' This was the manner in which Sri Ramakrishna constantly lived in the living presence of the Mother, as you do in your apartment with your parents.

In fact, at a later stage of spiritual evolution, *it is no longer a deliberate practice of an adopted idea* but the discovery of the basic fact of existence. As Brother Lawrence said a few days before his death, '... Now I do not believe, but I see.' When one reaches that state there is no action which is not an adoration of God, which is not going about the 'father's business', to quote the boy Jesus' words.

Ramprasad, the great Indian mystic whose songs were always on the lips of Sri Ramakrishna, cultivated the presence of the Divine Mother through the outpourings of his songs. Not only that, he quarreled with Her, chastised Her, sang Her praise, joked with Her, and while in agony brought his sorrows before Her. And even when Mother seemed to have deserted him, it was only in Her name that he cried. When temptations assailed him he wailed before the Mother, singing a song which must have been disconcerting even to Kālī:

Mother, this is the grief that sorely grieves my heart,
That even with Thee for Mother, and although I am wide awake,
There should be robbery in my house.
Many and many a time I vow to call on Thee,
Yet when the time for prayer comes round, I have forgotten.
Now I see it is all Thy trick.

As Thou hast never given, so Thon receivest naught;
Am I to blame for this, O Mother? Hadst Thou but given,
Surely then Thou hadst received;
Out of Thine own gifts I should have given to Thee.

Glory and shame, bitter and sweet, are Thine alone;
This world is nothing but Thy play.
Then why, O Blissful One, dost Thou cause a rift in it?

Says Ramprasad: Thou hast bestowed on me this mind,
And with a knowing wink of Thine eye
Bidden it, at the same time, to go and enjoy the world.
And so I wander here forlorn through Thy creation,
Blasted, as it were, by someone's evil glance,
Taking the bitter for the sweet,
Taking the unreal for the Real.²⁹

Songs like this of Ramprasad give us a vivid impression of how real the Divine Presence can be in the devotee's life. Even when it is a complaint against the Mother's absence, *it is charged with Her felt presence*, for complaint is addressed to be heard. Otherwise, who would complain?

When deep in your heart you feel that you are deserted by God; when you feel darkness and dryness in your heart; when you feel that you have no devotion; when you watch yourself assailed by temptations, and God is nowhere to be seen, and you are agonized to the extent that you feel this life to be useless—well, then God is there present in the form of the very pangs you feel. So bring then those pangs of your heart to the altar, and if you so wish, weep until you have no more tears. Perhaps, then you will discover. *God is only as far from you as you have chosen to keep Him!* Why, did He not declare time and again He resides in your very heart? What have you really done to discover Him there? Have you really done anything? Have you really thrown out the inner debris, under which the silent voice of God moans?

Then how can you complain, friends? Yet if you want to complain, *do* complain.

29. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 66.

But *directly to God*, right in His personal hearing. Then you will have cultivated the presence of God even in His supposed absence. When Rādhā pined at the absence of Kṛṣṇa, her whole being was charged with Kṛṣṇa's presence. *Agonizing feeling of separation from God is also a form of union with Him.*

In the final state of realization of God, we have *not* to practise His presence. He then is seen everywhere for *verily all that exists is He*. We have not to create His presence by an act of imagination. We then just go about and see Him everywhere and in everything. Sri Ramakrishna loved to hear Narendra sing this song to him which expresses the state of the devotee who has come to realize the abiding presence of God in everything:

I have joined my heart to Thee: All that exists art Thou.

Thee only have I found, for Thou art all that exists.

O Lord, Beloved of my heart! Thou art the Home of all;

Where indeed is the heart in which Thou dost not dwell?

Thou hast entered every heart: all that exists art Thou.

Whether sage or fool, whether Hindu or Mussalman,

Thou makest them as Thou wilt: all that exists art Thou.

Thy presence is everywhere, whether in heaven or in Kaaba;

Before Thee all must bow, for Thou art all that exists.

From earth below to the highest heaven, from heaven to deepest earth,

I see Thee wherever I look: all that exists art Thou.

Pondering, I have understood; I have seen it beyond a doubt;

I find not a single thing that may be compared to Thee.

To Jafar it has been revealed that Thou art all that exists.³⁰

30. *Ibid.*, p. 963-964.

When a devotee attains to such a state he can worship in any fashion he likes. In such a state and mood Ramprasad sang his famous song:

Listen, 'O my mind,
Worship the Mother Divine in any fashion you like,
Repeating day in and out
The Mantra given by the Guru.

Let lying down be considered as prostration,
And sleeping as meditation of the Mother,
And as you go about in the city

Think that you are circumambulating the Divine Mother.

Whatever you hear by your ear
Are all Mantras of the Mother.
Mother pervades everything;
In eating, think you are giving
Oblations to the Mother.

This is the acme of worship, when God is seen as everything, in everything and beyond.

(to be concluded)

FAITH, REASON AND REALIZATION

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The arguments in support of faith and those in support of reason do not establish the superiority of one over the other, and therefore do not resolve the controversy. What, then, should be the way? Can spiritual quest and scientific outlook go together? Must one discard reason altogether in order to have faith? Would the faith that suppresses honest doubt be considered sincere? Or should one cultivate skepticism in order to be spiritual?

THE PERSPECTIVE OF VEDANTA

Vedānta harmonizes faith and reason in the background of realization. The contention of Vedānta has several points of emphasis, the *first* of which is that the validity of Truth depends neither on faith nor on reason but on Its realization in life.

The reality of God is not contingent upon the negation or affirmation of scripture or reason. Religion is realization. Realization of Truth is neither scholasticism, which delights in logical postulation, nor blind

faith in any creed or dogma or miraculous event, nor ethics tinged with emotion. Realization is more than believing or reasoning. Believers in faith run the risk of being deluded by their emotions, and believers in reason by their intellectual preferences. There is a difference between the realization of Truth and Its conception, between what we believe emotionally, comprehend intellectually, and really feel spontaneously. Blind faith depends on theological evidence, while unbridled reasoning relies on unrestrained skepticism. The extreme form of the first is dogmatism, which often claims to know everything about God, and the extreme form of the second is the philosophy of atheism, which believes more in the denial than in the acceptance of Truth. Such faith or reason can never give us the certainty of inner conviction. An aspirant may master all the arts of reasoning, or study all the sacred texts, and yet remain an atheist or an agnostic.

The core of the realization of Truth is not 'seeking' but 'seeing', and 'seeing'

begins where 'seeking' ends. The Upaniṣadic exhortation is 'Do not seek God, but see Him.' It is seeing through the eye of integral vision, in which our entire self participates. Merely believing in the existence of God is neither seeking Him nor seeing Him. Such a belief or faith is neither conviction nor realization but mere opinion. It is neither stable nor valid because it is not supported by reason and personal experience. Mere reasoning, on the other hand, because it is intent on seeking, is unable to see that which is self-evident. Realization is seeing the Self-revealed. It is revelation and becomes possible when the instruments of perception are cleansed.

God, according to Vedānta, has two aspects—macrocosmic and microcosmic. Seeing God in everything (the macrocosm) begins with seeing Him as one's indwelling Self (the microcosm). Our perception of the Real depends on what we believe to be the nature of Reality. What we perceive outside is the reflection of what we see within ourselves. The macrocosm and the microcosm are built on the same plan. The goal of spiritual quest, according to Vedānta, is liberation. Liberation does not mean going somewhere we have not been before or acquiring something that we did not have before. It is a state of 'being', as distinguished from the feverishness of compulsive 'becomings'. It is unitive vision, by which one sees one's own Self in all and all in one's Self. The state of liberation is that of perfect freedom, which transcends all varieties of perception—moral, intellectual, and spiritual. A liberated soul is not just a knower of Truth, but is the very embodiment of Truth. He is neither a theologian who believes in creed and behaves as if he knew everything about God, nor a philosopher who indulges in speculation. He is neither a traditionalist who clings to orthodoxy, nor a futurist who lives in the days yet to come. The free soul com-

munes with the Truth and is not content with either describing It or gathering facts about It.

Realization of Truth proceeds from an inner maturity or evolution, which begins with the dawning of faith. Faith matures into conviction through reasoning and discrimination; intellectual conviction about Truth inspires the mind toward uninterrupted concentration, and this concentration culminates in the final revelation of Truth. Vedānta accepts both reason and faith as instruments for the realization of the ultimate spiritual goal. There cannot be genuine faith without reasoning and discrimination. On the other hand, one cannot discriminate Truth from untruth unless one has implicit faith in the Truth. Neither faith nor reason singly can give any finality to the real nature of Truth. The realization of Truth is possible only through the cooperation of both. The testimony of faith without the foundation of inner conviction is mere conjecture, while the conclusions of reason unsupported by personal experience only indicate that which is not Truth, since the ultimate Reality, infinite and incorporeal, defies all attempts of the finite human mind to define and know It.

The Upaniṣads indicate the ultimate Reality as the imperishable Absolute, the eye of our eye, the ear of our ear, the very ground of our being, which cannot be grasped by the discursive intellect or described by words. All our attempts to describe the Ultimate end in profound silence. 'He who knows he knows, knows nothing because nobody knows the Knower.' The vision of the Ultimate varies from individual to individual, depending on the spiritual seeker's disposition of mind. Our realizations of the Ultimate indicate how It appears to us and not what It really is in Itself. These realizations have been described by the various religious systems as communion with God, union with Him, *samādhi*, *nirvāṇa*, and so forth, and Vedānta con-

siders them to be like different photographs of a cathedral or temple taken from different angles of vision. Each is true and unique but never complete.

The *second point of emphasis* is that realization of Truth must be direct and immediate. Our ordinary perceptions are indirect because they are experienced through the instruments of the senses—eyes, ears, nose, skin and tongue. Such experiences are neither direct nor immediate, and they are often vitiated by the imperfections of the instruments of perception. For example, imperfection in a person's eyes may lead him to see an object doubled or disfigured, or the perversions of his mind may make him see and feel something in a distorted way. Direct perception of the ultimate Reality is neither unconscious nor conscious. It is superconscious and is reflected in the mirror of the pure mind free from all attachments and aversions. Superconscious realization of Truth is known as intuitive realization.

According to Vedānta, there are three instruments of knowledge: instinct, reason, and intuition. Instinctive experiences are automatic and unconscious, such as breathing, the beating of the heart, and the circulation of the blood. In such activities the 'I'-consciousness remains dormant. Reason is the mature form of instinct. The vision of reason is wider than that of instinct. One's 'I'-consciousness becomes active when one uses reason as an instrument of knowledge. The experiencer in this state is able to separate himself from the act of experiencing as well as from the object experienced. Experience through reason is, however, not direct because it is conditioned by reason. It is an experience which is conscious but not spontaneous. It is not a decisive realization because it is not supported by the entire self. We reason about a thing until we are convinced about it and are able to see it directly. An experience conditioned by and dependent upon reason

is, therefore, not founded on the absolute certainty of realization. Intuitive realization is the mature form of reason and is always amenable to reason. The vision of intuition is the widest. It is superconscious, direct, and immediate. Intuitive realization never conflicts with the experiences of relative facts, just as the adulthood of a person does not negate his childhood. Realization is intuitive because it is neither inferential nor impulsive.

Intuitive experiences are marked by three characteristics. They are universal; they do not disturb or contradict reason; and they are conducive to the welfare of all beings. Intuitive realization of Truth is inspirational. It is the direct vision of the tranquil heart negatively corroborated by reason. That which is absolute Truth cannot be realized except through the heart, but Its realization is established only when all possible alternatives to It are negated by reasoning. The ideal knower of Truth is a free soul who has transcended all pairs of opposites, such as pleasure and pain, good and evil, virtue and vice, which are the various polarities and rigidities of the mind. The proof of genuineness of intuitive realization is not anything private or mystical; its surest indication is the transformation of character. As a tree is known by the fruits it bears, so is a knower of Truth to be recognized by the total transformation of his character. Such a knower of Truth becomes the very embodiment of Truth, living and moving under Its spell. For him the experience of Truth is not only spontaneous but also continuous.

This Realization, according to Vedānta, has two aspects, *jñāna* or subjective experience, which is inner, and *vijñāna*, which is the objective realization of the same through living. Realization becomes complete when what is intuitively experienced within the heart manifests in the form of spiritually creative, spontaneous actions in everyday life. The depth of an aspirant's

spiritual realization is always proportional to the degree of spiritual creativity he has achieved. Intuitive realization is possible only when an aspirant has been able to overcome the mind, which by nature is restless, turbulent, obstinate, and not easily subdued by reason. Such overcoming of the mind is never possible without the practice of intense spiritual disciplines.

There are skeptics who often look upon any such practice of spiritual disciplines to overcome the mind as a form of conditioning and obedience to the injunctions of the scriptures as self-indoctrination. The traditions of Vedānta, however, contend that superconscious realization is never possible unless the mind is pure and free from all attachments and aversions, that is, free from all conditioning. The mind and the senses, already conditioned by various habits and preconceived ideas, are to be deconditioned by the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Nevertheless, the direct perception of Reality is not something that is produced by the practice of spiritual disciplines. It is a revelation. Truth is revealed in the mirror of the heart when it has been thoroughly cleansed. Prayer and meditation, sacraments and ceremonies, vows and austerities, cannot give us the vision of Truth, they can only help us to remove the coverings of the mind. They are only means to enable the aspirant to pursue his path of reasoning until the Truth is realized, for when the Real is experienced directly all reasoning comes to a stop and all doubts are stilled forever. We no longer reason about that which we directly perceive.

Vedānta emphasizes that reasoning must be supported by the practice of four disciplines. The first of these disciplines is the practice of discrimination between the Real and the unreal. That which is Real is characterized by Its unchanging character, Its continuity and Its universality. Vedānta describes this Reality as Brahman, or the Absolute, all-pervading pure Consciousness.

It is nondual, infinite, incorporeal, and immutable, and is the Reality of both the macrocosm and the microcosm. The world of diversity is an appearance and Vedānta designates this appearance as Māyā. Brahman and Māyā are not two realities but one inseparable reality. Neither are the two aspects ever in conflict; they complement each other. The shadow of an object has no meaning without the object to which it belongs; similarly, the world of Māyā is inexplicable without the knowledge of Brahman. Liberation, according to Vedānta, is this very knowledge of Brahman, and we are all moving towards this liberation, consciously or unconsciously. The three basic aspirations of all living beings are: to exist eternally, to know the unknown, and to be happy. The fulfilment of these three aspirations is attained only through the knowledge of Brahman, since Brahman is of the nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. While the ignorant think that it is difficult to attain the knowledge of Brahman, the knowers of Brahman declare that it is not possible to remain eternally ignorant. So long as one has not realized Brahman, one confronts It everywhere as the inexorable law of cause and effect.

The second discipline is the practice of the renunciation of that which is intellectually perceived to be unreal. It is the habit of the average mind to cling to something emotionally even though convinced about its unreality intellectually. Through the practice of renunciation the aspirant must overcome the habit of emotional clinging. The third discipline is mastery over the mind, which involves its control and regulation. No control is ever possible without regulation. To achieve control and regulation of the mind and the senses one must have one-pointed devotion to the quest of Truth and be endowed with fortitude, which is even-mindedness under all conditions; implicit faith in one's spiritual worthiness

and in the spiritual hypothesis; contentment; self-settledness; self-control; and concentration. The fourth discipline is intense longing for Truth. All spiritual practices and all reasoning become futile unless one feels a deep inner longing for the realization of Truth.

The *third point of emphasis* of Vedānta is that the validity of spiritual realization depends upon three tests: *śruti*, or testimony of the scriptures; *yukti*, or reasoning; and *anubhuti*, or personal experience. Any one of these singly may enable a seeker to attain the probability of Truth, but not Its final certainty. Such certainty can be attained only when all three tests are applied to verify the validity of such Truth.

Scriptures, Vedānta emphasizes, cannot be taken to be exhaustive accounts of Truth. They are merely suggestive. Scriptures have no value for the ignorant since they have no interest in them. They are equally of no use to the knowers of Truth because they have realized the Truth directly in their lives, and are therefore no longer dependent upon the scriptures. Scriptures are what Sri Ramakrishna indicates as almanacs which, although they forecast rain, do not contain the rain. They are useful insofar as they are considered to be testimonies of the experiences of the past knowers of Truth. But to believe in such testimonies without verification through reason and personal experience is like believing in the beliefs of others, which cannot serve as an inspiration for life. Therefore, an aspirant is advised to dwell on the essence of the scriptures and align his life accordingly. In the words of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, what has been described by numberless scriptures can be put forth in half a verse: 'Brahman alone is Real, the world is illusory, and the individual and Brahman are identical in essence.'

Sole dependence on reasoning for the certainty of Truth, however, often leads one to intellectual rationalization. Reasoning

works well only when it is directed towards a goal and supported by the practice of the four disciplines. Unless the mind of an aspirant is free from all attachments and aversions, his reasoning is bound to be conditioned by these and thus prove futile and inconclusive. The efficacy of reasoning as an instrument of knowledge depends not merely on its perfection but also on its right use. According to Vedānta, the right use of reasoning is its rational use as opposed to irrational use. Rational use calls for sincerity of purpose and honesty of doubt. The goal of reasoning is to dispel doubts and help one to discover the Truth for oneself, but no reasoning, however perfect, can dispel doubts which have no rational basis. Rational doubts are always sincere, plausible, and relevant. Irrational doubts, on the other hand, are irrelevant, unreasonable and obsessive. Such doubts, which are rationalized expressions of the doubter's emotional and intellectual fixations, frustrate and defeat the very purpose of reasoning. Rational use of reasoning initiates a process of positive and creative thinking and such thinking is free from the pressures of any tradition, authority, convention or emotion. In contrast, irrational use of reasoning is negative and, therefore, uncreative, and cynical. It is a form of compulsive skepticism that is often prone to raise a doubt merely for the sake of doubting. The watchword for the rational use of reasoning is 'exploration', while that for its irrational use is 'manipulation'.

The traditions of Vedānta mention three types of reasoning: *vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitaṇḍā*. *Vāda* is academic reasoning, the goal of which is to discover Truth without having a bias for or against the hypothesis. This type of reasoning seeks to establish the fact by highlighting the merits of such a hypothesis. *Jalpa* is that type of reasoning in which the main purpose is to defeat the arguments of the opponent by any means, rational or irrational. It is reasoning in a

dogmatic and negative way. The third type of reasoning, *vitandā*, seeks only to lay bare the defects of the opponent's contentions without trying to suggest an alternative hypothesis. The *vitandā* type of reasoning may also take the form of *chala*, which is a rejoinder that seeks to wilfully misinterpret the arguments of the opponent, or *nigraha*, the purpose of which is to give arguments in such a way that they will not be understood by the opponent even though repeated several times.

Reasoning in Vedānta is not arguing. Neither is it reasoning with any bias for or against the hypothesis. It is *vicāra* or a process of rational discrimination between the Real and the unreal. Absolute Reality is affirmed by negating all that is relative. The contention of Vedānta is that an average mind is subject to habitual doubts, preconceived ideas, and personal sentiments. Unless guarded by reason it can easily lapse into inertia and delusion. There is no way of dispelling these prejudices of the mind except through reasoning. Vedānta

exhorts an aspirant to scrutinize the meaning of Truth and to make a critical estimate of what he has realized to be true.

While reasoning by itself is inconclusive, scriptures by themselves cannot dispel doubt nor evoke conviction. The methods of valid knowledge according to Vedānta are: perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, postulation, and non-apprehension. But no one of these singly, nor several together, nor all of them in combination can decisively establish the finality of Truth, which is transcendental.

The last resort for an aspirant, therefore, is his personal experience. But even personal experience by itself is not to be considered enough, for one's personal experience can be deceptive, temporary, reflected, or false. In view of the insufficiency of the various instruments of knowledge, Vedānta contends that the validity of any direct experience of Truth can be assured only when it is corroborated by scriptural testimony and affirmed by reason.

(Concluded)

EARLY DAYS OF BELUR MATH

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The Students' Home at the Math

Swamiji started a sort of Students' Home at the Math in 1900. There were six boys.⁴⁴ Staying at the Math, they used to read at the schools of Bally and Calcutta.⁴⁵ Of those boys we now know the names of only three: Gour, Nadu, and Kheda. Gour's age was sixteen in the year 1900, Nadu was

about eighteen, and Kheda was only eight; Swamiji liked Gour and Nadu very much and used to call them his 'Nandi-Bhringi', 'Tal-Betal' or 'Humpty-Dumpty'.⁴⁶ These two boys served Swamiji till his last days, and with them Swamiji used to clean the drains or milk the goats. When he went to Bodh-Gaya and Varanasi, he took Gour and Nadu with him. One night at the Math, when Swamiji heard the cry of a kid he

⁴⁴. Belur Math Diary, 11 March 1900 (unpublished).

⁴⁵. *Udbodhan*, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 15.

⁴⁶. *Ibid.*, no. 3, p. 136.

suspected that some thief had come. He called Gour and Nadu to go with him with a chopper to face the thief. Another day a boy of the Home stole some coins from the Math office. Swami Brahmananda was furious at this, but Swamiji saved the boy saying, 'Well Raja, for a child this is mischief but not a crime. From tomorrow please give them some money so that in their school they may buy nuts or *dalmut* and have a good time.' The boys of the Home used to live with the monks. Gour and Nadu lived in the office room just by the side of Swamiji's room. The boys were under the supervision of Swami Shuddhananda. One of them entered monastic life later.

During Swamiji's time there was no protected water supply at the Math. So the inmates used to collect water twice a month (generally on the tenth lunar day) from the Ganga. There were eight huge tubs under the trees in the courtyard. The inmates used to stand in a line and collect water from the Ganga to fill them up. After a day or two when the sediment settled, the water was collected from a tub and kept in a pitcher which served as a homemade filter containing sand, alum, etc. Thus only clear and filtered water was used for cooking and drinking. As Swamiji's health needed better drinking water, Swami Bodhananda used to go to Baranagar, on the other bank of the river, to get tap-water for him.⁴⁷ For the inmates, drinking water was collected from the Gol-pukur and also from the well. Water for use in the toilet was kept in a big tub. As there were not many inmates staying permanently at the Math, the students and young devotees who used to come there also helped the inmates in collecting water from the river. Br. Jnan with the help of these students used to sweep and clean the Math grounds.

During those days general marketing for

the Math was done at Belur bazar. In the Belur village there was a grocery shop run by a gentleman named Tinkari.⁴⁸ His shop was on the northwest of the Math campus. Rice, *dāl*, spices, *mudī*, and other groceries for the Math were bought from his shop. Vegetables were grown in the kitchen-garden of the Math. But sometimes it so happened that there were no vegetables to be had there. Then Swami Premananda used to send some brahmacharis to Baranagar telling them, 'You all go to Narayan, Bhuvan, and Bhusan. Tell them that I have sent you for vegetables.' These three gentlemen were very much devoted to the Swami and whenever he sent anyone to them, they used to send a boatful of vegetables for the Math.

Nowadays monks and brahmacharis of the Math chant at the beginning of lunch or dinner the *Gītā* verse beginning with *brahmārpaṇam*, and after the meal is over they say *jay* to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and the Ganga. But it was not so during the early days. The inmates used to come for food and go without any chanting. It was Swami Shuddhananda who introduced the custom of saying *jay* after the meal.⁴⁹ Later the chanting of the *Gītā* verse was also added before the meal. During the meals in those days the inmates used to chant many Sanskrit verses from the scriptures, sometimes even Bengali couplets.

During the early days there was no cow at the Math, the first being bought in 1901. Swami Nischayananda and another monk were sent by Swamiji to a milkman at Ariadaha, near Dakshineswar, for that purpose. When they were returning with the cow by boat the cow took fright and jumped into the river. Swami Nischay-

⁴⁸. Information from Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji.

⁴⁹. Information from Swami Shivaswarupanandaji.

⁴⁷. Ibid., no. 2, p. 75.

ananda, with the cow's rope in his hand, also jumped and swam with the cow for a long distance until near Salkia he succeeded in taking the cow to the bank. Later some more cows were added to the monastic dairy. Besides, there were some dogs, swans, goats, a crane, and a deer. There was a kid goat also. Swamiji named the she-goat Hansi, and the kid Matroo. He tied a small bell round its neck. He was very fond of those birds and animals, and used to play with Matroo. Matroo also liked Swamiji very much and would go to Swamiji's room and sit on his chair. Sometimes Swamiji himself used to milk the goat. Sometimes he had to experiment to find cures when the animals or birds fell sick.

There were three dogs—Bagha, Mary and Lily. Bagha was an ordinary street dog which was brought to the Math as a puppy by Haru Thakur, the cook.⁵⁰ It had some noteworthy characteristics. Whenever any foreigner came to the Math, it received him at the gate, moved with him wherever he went, and lastly used to see him off at the gate. If any inmate needed to go to the toilet at night, Bagha would accompany him, as the place on the western side of the Math was full of bushes, trees and poisonous snakes. It used to lead him to the toilet, enter first to see if there was any snake, and finding it safe would allow the inmate to enter. When food was served for the dogs, Bagha used to wait till Mary and Lily finished their food before it would eat. During the early days there was no separate guest-house for foreign visitors, so they had to stay in tents in the Math campus. At night Bagha used to sleep near the tents and guard the guests. After its death Bagha was buried under a sandal-wood tree on the Math grounds.

50. Many incidents about Bagha were noted by Sri Mahendra Nath Datta in his Bengali book *Pashujatir Manovritti*, edited by Sri Bidhubhusan Sanyal (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 1362 B.S.).

More about those days

From October 1901 to January 1902 many *pūjās* were held at the Math. First there was Durgā Pūjā and then Lakṣmī Pūjā, Kālī Pūjā, and Saraswatī Pūjā, all being conducted in clay images. A description of the first Durgā Pūjā can be found in the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* and other books. Here let us present some less-known and unknown incidents regarding it.⁵¹ In the courtyard between the shrine-building and Math-building a temporary *pāṇḍāl* (pavillion) was put up where the image was installed for worship. The image faced west. The *Pāṇḍāl* extended up to the mango tree which still stands in the courtyard, and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna sat there. The devotees had their *prasāda* in the northwestern portion of the courtyard, in the space between the existing jackfruit tree and Ramakrishna temple. Brahmachari Krishnalal did the *pūjā*. He was tall, of fair complexion, his voice very soft,⁵² and his behaviour with others very polite. Sri Ishwarchandra Chakravarti, the father of Swami Ramakrishnananda, was the *tantra-dhāraka*, that is the main helper of the priest. He was strongly built and was an adept in Japa and the Tantra. Some years later Swami Saradananda practised *tantra-sādhana* under his guidance.⁵³

One day during the first Durgā Pūjā at the Math there was *yātra* (Indian drama) performance named *Nala-Damayantī*.⁵⁴ In a letter dated 12 November 1901 Swamiji wrote to Miss Christine Greenstidel:

51. Information from Revered Swami Abhay-anandaji.

52. Sri Pyarimohan Mukhopadhyay, *Smriti-tarpan* (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 1371 B.S.), pp. 1-2.

53. Swami Saradananda's Diary, 20 November 1900 (unpublished).

54. *Udbodhan*, vol. 42, no. 2, p. 75.

We had grand 'Pūjās' (worship) here in our Math this year. The biggest of our Pūjās is the Mother-worship lasting nearly four days and nights. We brought a clay image of Mother with ten hands standing with one foot on a lion, the other on a demon. Her two daughters, the goddess of learning and music, on either side on lotuses; beneath, her two sons—the god of war and that of wisdom.

Thousands of people were entertained; but I could not see the Pūjā alas! I was down with high fever all the time. Day before yesterday, however, came the Pūjā of Kālī. We had an image too and sacrificed a goat and burned a lot of fireworks.

It may be mentioned here that the Durgā Pūjā in clay image was held at the Math first in 1901. Later, from 1902 to 1911 the *pūjā* was held in *ghaṭ-paṭ*—in a special, sanctified pitcher and picture. Again in 1912 when a devotee promised to give the required money to buy a clay image, the *pūjā* was held in image.⁵⁵

On February 10, 1901, the first General Meeting of the trustees of the Math was held at Belur Math to elect the office-bearers. Swamiji handed over the property and responsibility to the trustees. Only the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna constituted the trust-board; to avoid legal complication Swamiji did not choose any of his own disciples as a trustee. The first trust-board was constituted by eleven monks—Swamis Advaitananda, Brahmananda, Shivananda, Premananda, Saradananda, Akhandananda, Trigunatitananda, Ramakrishnananda, Subodhananda, Abhedananda, and Turiyananda. Swami Adbhutananda did not agree to be a trustee. As a true democrat Swamiji never dictated to any of his brother-monks, rather he introduced the system of voting through ballot papers in selecting the office-bearers. The Proceedings Book recorded:

⁵⁵. Information from Revered Swami Abhay-anandaji.

FIRST MEETING: FEBRUARY 10, 1901
BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF THE SWAMI
VIVEKANANDA

The first general meeting of the Chartered Trustees of the Belur Math-Thakurbati, was held in the Math premises on February 10, 1901, four days after the property was made over to the Trustees by the due registration of the Deed by the Swami Vivekananda at the Howrah Registrar's Court on February 6, 1901. Eight of the eleven trustees were present on the occasion....

As we know, during the above-mentioned meeting Swami Ramakrishnananda was in Madras and Swami Abhedananda and Turiyananda were in the U.S.A.; hence they could not participate. But the other eight members were present. Swami Advaitananda, being the senior-most trustee, presided over the meeting. Three names were suggested for the office of President—Swamis Brahmananda, Saradananda, and Ramakrishnananda. Votes were taken and Swami Brahmananda was elected President for two years. He secured 5 votes whereas Swamis Ramakrishnananda and Saradananda got 2 and 1 votes respectively. The Proceedings Book further recorded:

The Swami Premananda then proposed that the Swami Saradananda be elected as the Secretary and the Swami Nirmalananda the Assistant Secretary for the Math. The Swami Trigunatita [nanda] seconded the proposal, and it was unanimously carried.

Swami Nirmalananda later declined to accept the post.

Last days of Swamiji

We have already mentioned how busy Swamiji was at the Belur Math, training the brahmacharis and meeting the guests who came to see him. Though his health did not permit him to work intensely, he yet busied himself with some manual work—sometimes working in the garden planting trees and sowing vegetable seeds, sometimes

cleaning the drains. Generally he used to sit on a canvas camp-cot facing west under the mango tree which is still standing in the courtyard of the Math. Another favourite sitting place of his was under the Bel tree on the bank of the river. Many a time he used to go about in the monastery with only a loin-cloth on, sometimes he used to stroll wearing a long robe along the village paths at Belur. Though he spent a long time either in his room or the upper eastern verandah of the Math-building, his favourite seats were under the mango and Bel trees. About his life at the Math he wrote to Miss Christine Greenstidel on July 6, 1901:

I rise very early. Then milk my goats; feed them. A dog puppy and a beautiful black kid are my special favourites. I take some exercise on a pair of dumbbells and then heat having got great, I loll about on a stretcher till 10 a.m.

Again on September 7 he wrote to her:

The rains have come down now in right earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring, pouring, night and day. The river is rising, flooding the banks; the ponds and tanks have overflowed. I have just now returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water from the Math grounds. The rain water stands at places several feet deep. My huge stork is full of glee, and so are the ducks and geese. My tame antelope fled from the Math and gave us some days of anxiety in finding him out. One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday.

Under Swamiji's direction Swami Vijnanananda took up the work on the founda-

tion of the river embankment and Swami Brahmananda kept the accounts for the work. On March 30, 1902, at 1 p.m. *pūjā* was performed in connection with that work. Earlier in 1901 Swami Advaitananda with the help of many Santhal labourers had started extensive work to level the ground of the Math property. Swamiji talked to these labourers freely and listened to their tales of weal and woe. One day he fed all of them at the Math.

Swamiji's room was quite large, with four windows and three doors. In the corner to the right of the entrance-door there was a mirror some five feet high, and then a rack for keeping clothes. Near the eastern wall was an iron bedstead fitted with a spring mattress which he hardly used, as generally he liked to sleep on a simple pallet on the floor. Near that bedstead there was a couch. Almost in the middle of the room there was a knee-hole writing table with pen, ink, paper, etc. A small mounted photo of Sri Ramakrishna and a metal vase with flowers were also on the table. Near the wall there was a small table with a set of porcelain teacups, saucers, and plates with spoons. Most of these things were presented by his Western devotees and friends. All are still preserved in the room, though the position of some of the furniture was later changed a little. His chair, table, bed, rack, clothes . . . everything is still there. Even the calendar on the wall reads: July 4, 1902.

(Concluded)

THE CONVENTION

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

Shortly before his passing away on July 4, 1902, Swami Vivekananda said on several different occasions that the work his master Sri Ramakrishna had entrusted him with was accomplished, and that he was ready to depart. What did he mean by this? Certainly the *results* of his work had not matured in 1902: according to the Swami himself, that maturing process would continue for 1,500 years. What he seems to have meant was that he had succeeded in giving direction to the tremendous spiritual power released by Sri Ramakrishna for the welfare of all beings. This much accomplished, he departed for his spiritual realm, knowing that the impetus he and his Master had given would thenceforth work irresistibly for ages to transform society on the physical, mental and spiritual planes.

But the passing away of Swamiji left his brother-disciples and his own disciples stunned: to them it appeared that Swamiji's work was only beginning. How were they to proceed now with the work he had started? It was as if the director of a play had disappeared after seeing to the scenery and calling the actors together. It is said that even several years after the Swami's passing, there was still a feeling of emptiness about Belur Math: the monks had not yet recovered from their loss.

The work did proceed, however, and in the able hands of Swami Brahmananda it began to thrive and expand. In 1922 Swami Brahmananda entered Mahāsamādhi, and Mahapurush Swami Shivananda took charge of the Order as its second President-General. By this time the Order was growing so rapidly that the senior monks thought it necessary to pause for a moment, take stock of the past and prepare for the future, and thus the idea of a general convention was conceived.

If, as members of the Order believe, Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji continue to guide the Order, why should it be necessary at all to call a convention to consider the work? And isn't the impetus given by them supposed to work *irresistibly*? Yes, but their guidance is not overt or obvious; they don't sit at a desk and give orders. Rather it is largely hidden in natural, historical processes. This is why an organization, trustee meetings, conferences and conventions are necessary: these are ways in which Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji indirectly make their will known, these are ways in which they effect their will. An Avatar is not born to put us to sleep, but to awaken us, to stimulate us to seek and to question and to strive; in this very seeking and striving we are beginning to fulfil his will.

So in 1926, in the presence of several of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the first general Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was held at Belur Math. On this historic occasion many important points were raised and discussed, and monks who witnessed it say that it had a quiet but very important effect on the direction the work of the Order took afterwards.

As years added up into decades, all of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna returned to their Abode of Light, India gained her long-sought independence, centres grew and multiplied, work diversified, and world thought and society underwent a revolutionary transformation. At the same time, the Order adapted its policies and programmes to meet the challenges posed by these various changes. By the late 1970s, however, it became more and more evident that it was necessary to take another pause, re-evaluate the past and consciously prepare for the future. The time was

obviously ripe, for what began as a tentative suggestion from a member of the Order's Governing Body, grew quickly into the second general Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, held at the Belur Math from December 23 to 29, 1980.

The stretch of Grand Trunk Road between Howrah and Belur is, even normally, a confused mass of vehicles of all sizes and descriptions, bicyclists, pedestrians, cows and various animals, and a large miscellany of other obstacles to a pilgrim's progress. So on the morning of December 23, 1980, we expected to find it absolutely impassable, for we had to make our way along with over 10,000 other people(!) to Belur Math for the Inaugural Session of the Convention.

Approaching Howrah Station from Calcutta, we began to see buses—old and new, small and large—as well as cars, displaying in their windows a placard identifying them as vehicles holding delegates bound for the Convention. As our vehicle moved through Salkia and Lilluah towards Belur, the density of vehicles increased, but amazingly the traffic didn't jam: it continued its slow, serpentine course as if the eagerness of thousands was refusing it rest.

We were greeted by banners and signboards put up by banks and different companies along the way, welcoming the delegates to the Convention. Then, turning off of Grand Trunk Road onto the Saradapith road we passed beneath a large, beautiful arch erected over the street to welcome the delegates. Now we saw a huge line of devotee-delegates stretching past the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandir campus, waiting to enter the Belur Math grounds as their credentials were being checked by volunteers—for only registered delegates were allowed inside the gate.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that his consciousness was uplifted by the sight of many people gathered together. Getting down

from the vehicle and walking through the main gate, we were met with a sight which—at least in imagination—gave us a feeling for what he had meant: the wide roadway leading from the main gate up to the Math grounds was filled with countless monks and devotees, making their way to the temple and Convention pavillion. It was a rare and unforgettable experience to see so many people coming from all over India and abroad, gathering in the name of Sri Ramakrishna.

Passing through the last gate before the Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters office building, we found the head of the main line of delegates whose tail we had seen far back alongside the Vidyamandir campus: It was inching its way into the Convention pavillion. And what a pavillion! In width it covered the lawn between the two brick-paved roads running north-south on the eastern side of the Ramakrishna temple. In length it went from the small fenced-in rose garden at the north end of the lawn, up to the east-west road running in a line just to the south of the Swami Brahmananda temple. Not only was the pavillion huge, but it was beautifully decorated as well. On the other side of the north-south road near the Ganga was another, narrower, parallel pavillion for overflow seating.

Even before 9 a.m. the chairs (about 10,000) in the pavillions were full, and there were about 3,000 people standing outside or sitting on the raised platform and steps of the main temple. At the north end of the pavillion was the long dais, raised about five feet above ground. On its centre was a chair for Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General of the Ramakrishna Order; and to either side was a long table, at which the presiding dignitaries of the Order sat. Behind them were more chairs for the various delegate-speakers and others concerned with the direction of the daily programme. At the very back hung three large oil-paintings of Sri Ramakrishna,

Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. In the audience, over four hundred sannyasins and brahmacharins of the Order sat in the front centre; to the left front was a delegation of sannyasinis and brahmacharinis of the Sarada Math; to the right front were guests of honour; and filling the rest of the huge pavillion was a sea of devotees stretching back to the south entrance—but a sea in which every individual was of supreme value and significance in himself, for with deep devotion each carried within him the infinite Lord.

Just at 9.15 a.m. the Convention was opened with Vedic chanting, followed by a devotional song and a reading from Swami Vivekananda. Swami Hiranmayananda, President of the Convention Committee, then delivered the Welcome Address. Next, Swami Vandanananda, Secretary-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, spoke to the gathering. In the meantime, printed copies of Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj's Inaugural Address were distributed among the delegates. This was now read for the Revered President-General of the Order, as he was unable to give it himself due to advanced age. Next, translations of the Address were read in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Kannada. This thought-provoking Address set the tone for the week-long proceedings. (Please refer to the March '81 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* where it was published.)

Revered President Maharaj now released the mammoth *Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention 1980 Souvenir* and a small booklet of excerpts from Swami Vivekananda entitled *Rebuild India*, published especially for the Convention. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Secretary of the Convention Committee, then gave the vote of thanks, which was followed by announcements and the closing song.

It being now lunch time, we proceeded towards the dining area, and were amazed to see the arrangements which had been made.

After all, feeding so many people is no joke! The large, brick-paved courtyard in front of the Math office building was completely covered by a pavillion, and so was the brick-paved courtyard on the other side of the long hallway which leads from the dining hall to the temple. Here devotees were accommodated in shifts, while foreign delegates—unused to squatting on the ground—were fed at tables in the said hallway between the pavillions. Sadhus and brahmacharins were accommodated in two pavillions beside Leggett House.

At 3 p.m. the afternoon session began, the subject being 'The Ramakrishna Movement', presided over by Swami Gambhirananda, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order. After the opening song, Swami Budhananda (New Delhi) delivered the Keynote Address, followed by eight short speeches by delegates from various parts of India and from different fields of life, including one by Pravrajika Shraddhaprana, Assistant Secretary of the Sarada Math, Dakshineswar. Next, Swami Gambhirananda delivered the Presidential Address.

By the close of the afternoon session it was practically dark. Devotee-delegates began to gather in groups—small and large—in the Math grounds, getting ready to return to their respective quarters, some by bus, some by car. Out of the almost thirteen thousand delegates, about five thousand came from outside Greater Calcutta. Food and lodging arrangements were made by the Convention Committee for about three and a half thousand of these outside delegates in schools, dormitories and dharma-shalas in the towns of Belur, Lilluah and Salkia; arrangements for their transportation to and from Belur Math were also made by the Committee. For the convenience of delegates staying in Calcutta, arrangements were made for special launches connecting Belur Math and Calcutta across the Ganga.

That night at Belur Math it became obvious how so much food was prepared

for so many people. Loud sounds of intense activity seemed to come from the kitchen area all night !

The programme on the remaining days of the Convention followed much the same pattern as we have described for the afternoon session on the 23rd: there would be an invocation (usually Vedic chanting), followed by the Keynote Address by a senior monk of the Order; short speeches by several delegates—mostly devotees, but including some Swamis; the Presidential Address by a senior monk; the Vote of Thanks; announcements; and finally, the closing song. The morning sessions began at 9, afternoon sessions at 3.

On December 24 the subject of the morning session was 'The Ramakrishna Sangha'. In the afternoon 'Practical Vedanta' was discussed. As it was Christmas Eve, a simple but moving Christmas Eve service was held in the pavillion after dark. A special altar with a picture of the Madonna and Child had been erected and tastefully decorated. The service began with a simple offering to Christ in the picture, followed by short talks on Christ by three Swamis. After supper there were Christmas carols.

On Christmas morning there was no meeting. Instead, a pilgrimage by bus to Dakshineswar, Cossipore and Udbodhan was arranged for the delegates coming from outside the Calcutta area. For this, about forty buses were reserved.

As the afternoon session was to be at the Netaji Indoor Stadium in Calcutta, special launches took delegates from Belur to a dock just within a short walking distance of the Stadium. This athletic theatre was now transformed into a house of prayer: a huge oil painting of Sri Ramakrishna stood behind the dais, the floor of the arena was carpeted and decorated with marigolds, and the seats were filled with devotees who had come to hear about 'The Message of Sri Ramakrishna', the subject for this session. Besides the delegates, who sat in

the chairs, hundreds of other people were allowed to enter and sit on the floor of the arena to hear the programme. All in all there were around 15,000 people gathered in the Stadium.

Belur Math was the site of the morning session on December 26, the subject being 'Activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in India'. The programme included Swamis and devotees from various parts of the country. The afternoon session was again at Netaji Stadium, the subject this time being 'Inter-religious Understanding'—a subject of immense importance to all followers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and increasingly recognized as important by all religious people everywhere in the modern world. Representatives of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism spoke on the fundamentals of their respective faiths. There was also a talk on 'Ramakrishna and Religious Harmony'. This was one of the most interesting sessions of the whole Convention. There was no jarring notes, and the representative of each religion spoke in a background of universal sympathy.

Saturday morning, December 27, the session was held at Belur Math, as were all the subsequent sessions. The subject of discussion was 'Our Work Outside India', and the speakers included Swamis and devotees from London, Geneva, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Hollywood, Dacca and Dinajpur (Bangla Desh). As Swami Rudrananda of Fiji Islands was indisposed, his paper was read for him. In the afternoon session 'Problems before the Ramakrishna Mission' were discussed.

December 28 was the birth anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, so no session of the Convention was convened that day, the birthday celebration being conducted at the Math as it is every year, and open to the public. But for delegates coming from outside the Calcutta area, a

pilgrimage by bus to Jayrambati and Kamarpukur was arranged. For this, forty-seven buses were reserved. Those who went said that the sheer number of buses headed for Jayrambati-Kamarpukur was in itself a deeply inspiring sight.

The morning session on December 29 dealt with the 'Role of Devotees and Friends', one of the main topics touched on throughout the Convention.

The afternoon session was a time for looking back over the past week and summarizing what had been learned, a time for thanking the many, many people who had helped make the Convention a success, and a time for goodbyes. Valedictory Addresses were given by Swami Vandanananda, Prof. Alan R. Freedman (Seattle), Mr. V. N. Sharma (Rajahmundry), Swami Smaranananda (Saradapith) and Swami Lokeswarananda. Swami Lokeswarananda mentioned three things which we participants in the Convention had gained: (1) We had again and again been reminded of our life's ideal—no insignificant gain for any spiritual aspirant. (2) Making Sri Ramakrishna our centre, a sense of oneness had been manifested in the midst of different religions, different languages, etc. (3) We had learned that the Ramakrishna Order and Movement is *our own*; the Movement must be loved, it must be served; in good times and in bad times and in all conditions we must stand by it.

Then the Presidential Address was given by Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj in which he said that this sort of Convention would serve no purpose if the participating delegates did not return to their respective fields of life and try to actualize the ideas that had been discussed at the Convention. He encouraged all to serve the backward and depressed classes, the poor, the homeless and neglected, and hoped that the Convention would stimulate the delegates to build a new society in tune with the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. His

extemporaneous address was then translated into Hindi and Bengali.

Swami Atmasthananda, Assistant Secretary of the Math and Mission, next gave a short address and thanked all those who had helped to make the Convention a success. Swami Hiranmayananda then gave the vote of thanks, telling in a very moving way how inspiring a sight it had been to see thousands of devotees gathered in Belur Math for the past week, and how difficult it was now to say goodbye. Finally, with the closing song the Second General Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission was brought to a close.

Special mention should be made of the exquisite Exhibition held at the Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandir, B.T. College building, within short walking distance of the main Convention grounds. This was open from 2.30 to 7.30 p.m., from December 22 to January 1. Divided into four sections spread over three floors of the building, the Exhibition displayed the following: (1) forty of Sri Ramakrishna's tales and parables illustrated in beautifully executed clay models, a traditional art of rural Bengal; (2) a photographic history and report of the present activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission through their 117 branches and Headquarters at the Belur Math; (3) an exhibition of some of the works by great artists and sculptors, either in original or photographic copies, representing Sri Ramakrishna, his associates and his deeds, with a special section allocated to the work of Acharya Nandalal Bose; (4) and finally, an exhibition of rural arts and crafts in India. The amount of work and talent that went into the exhibition made it a source of great attraction during the Convention.

On several evenings after supper there was some entertainment for the delegates. Besides the Christmas Eve service there were music performances, dramas, and tribal

dances by young men from Arunachal Pradesh and Purulia.

Due to limitations of space, the important points discussed in each session have not been mentioned here, for in every meeting many seminal ideas were brought out. However, during the Convention a devotee mentioned to me that the monks should give five points which the delegates could take home and remember as a summary-statement of what had been discussed at the Convention; this, the devotee said, would give them something to work with, so that the Convention would have a more concrete effect on their lives. Well, no such authoritative statement can be given here, of course, for everyone undoubtedly saw the Convention with different eyes. But I can give one participant's personal summary of what seemed to him to be the major points stressed in the Convention.

Over and over again it was pointed out that the Ramakrishna Movement is not limited to monks. Devotees are an integral part, a vital part of the Movement. As such, they should become more involved—and the monks need to help devise ways for this—in the work of the Movement. This was probably the major point stressed throughout the whole Convention, and it underlies as their basis the five points given below:

(1) *Private centres should take a more active role in spreading the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and they should be multiplied throughout India.* Even now many parts of the country have remained largely untouched by the Movement. As there are not nearly enough monks to send to all these places, the devotees must help in the cause by opening more private centres and engaging in preaching work. Only then can the Movement become truly mass-based. (2) A valuable suggestion given from the side of the devotees was this: though it is not possible now for the Order to affiliate all the private centres in India and abroad that are requesting it, *the Order*

could consider appointing a committee which would work with the private centres, giving them guidance and occasionally sending Swamis of the Order to visit them and thus bringing them closer to the Movement's mainstream even without affiliation. (Though this suggestion was made by only one or two of the speakers, it is included here as it seemed to voice the desire of many present.) (3) Due to limited numbers, the monks of the Order cannot possibly uplift the country alone. *The monks are merely setting an example in how the masses are to be raised, but it is necessary for society as a whole to take up this work in a spirit of worship on a grand scale.* Only then will there be hope for the regeneration of society. (4) In several areas, notably West Bengal, our centres have faced tremendous opposition, and the sadhus have sometimes even been assaulted, by selfishly motivated political and social groups, the 'fault' of the sadhus being their desire to run schools, hospitals and other institutions for the uplift of society. Being sadhus, their means of self-defence are extremely limited. But *it is the dharma of householders to protect religion, so devotees should take an active part in protecting the Order in times of persecution.* (5) Much thought needs to be given to the foreign work. Many important countries have no centres, affiliated or private; others have far fewer than they need. Again the paucity of Swamis prevents the opening of many new foreign centres in the immediate future, so *other ways should be devised for spreading the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda to the rest of the world, keeping in mind the integrity of each culture* (for it was the wish of Swami Vivekananda that the principles of Vedānta be taught to the world, letting each country give them cultural embodiment according to its own genius).

These five points deal with the practical work of the Movement. Many vital areas of theory and doctrine were also discussed;

but to do justice to them, much more space would be required.

One other very vital point cannot justifiably be included in the five main points as it was made by only two of the speakers, Swami Nityabodhananda of Geneva and Marie Louise Burke of San Francisco. They each said in their own way that we need to form something roughly similar to the 'Third Order' which is found among the Franciscan and other Christian mendicant monastic orders. This would be for those devotees who want to dedicate their lives to the quest for God and the service of man, but who for some reason or other do not want to, or cannot, join the monastic order as ordained monks or nuns. For example, some may have a great talent that demands expression, such as writing or research, but which may not be assured scope for development in the Order; others may have an intense desire to lead a dedicated life of spiritual striving and service, but they have family responsibilities which prevent them from joining the Order; and there are many other possible reasons. For these people a 'Third Order' for 'semi-monastics' (the first and second orders being for monks and nuns) would be a great boon, giving them community support, encouragement and inspiration, and social recognition.

Another important suggestion concerning the Convention itself was made by several devotees on the fourth or fifth day. They said that it would be good if the delegates were divided up into manageable groups for group-discussion, in which the points made during the main sessions could be gone into

more deeply with more delegate participation. As Swami Hiranmayananda said in reply to this suggestion, it was very encouraging to see that the devotees were taking such an interest in the proceedings, but it was too late at that point in the Convention to organize group-discussions. There will be future conventions, however, and the suggestion can be given serious consideration then, for through such discussions the real heart-throb of the Movement can be felt.

As Revered President Maharaj said in his Valedictory Address, the Convention will have been a failure if the delegates do not return home and try to actualize the ideas discussed. The purpose of the Convention was not to have a big get-together, hear lectures and make contacts, but to bring the Movement—consisting of monks and householders—into a sense of greater solidarity and coordination, and to reconsider the Ideal and how it is to be realized in all spheres of life, individual and social. Time alone will tell how successfully the Convention has accomplished this. Nevertheless, the Convention has already succeeded in showing the Ramakrishna Movement to be a world force. And more important, it has demonstrated the noble qualities of character found among the followers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda; for in spite of hardships and discomforts consequent on attending such a huge affair, the almost 13,000 delegates conducted themselves throughout the week with such quiet dignity and grace that praise cannot do them justice.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

LEGENDS AROUND SHIVA: BY SHAKTI M. GUPTA. Published by Somaiya Publications, 172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha-Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014. 1979. Pp. 137. Rs. 75.

One of the most popular aspects of God in Hinduism is Śiva. He is described as both terrible and benign, creative and destructive. Hindu religious literature contains many legends about Śiva which describe his *līlā*. The authoress of the book under review has collected many of those legends and tried to present them in a lucid style. How Śiva married Satī, burned Kāmadeva, made an elephant-head for Gaṇeśa, killed many *asuras*, and many other legends have been described, including those about the birth of Kārtikeya, Manasā, Netō, Mangala, and others. The legends around Śiva's chariot, five heads, Natarāja aspect, etc. have been retold from various sources. One chapter is devoted to the story of the *Chandī* describing the birth and *Līlā* of Śakti. In the first two chapters she traces the worship of Śiva from the Indus Valley civilization to modern times, and gives a lucid account of his various manifestations, his iconography and symbolism.

Dr. Shakti M. Gupta deserves appreciation for her attempt in bringing together so many legends connected with Śiva. The book contains fifty-four photographs taken from different temples and museums which show different aspects of Śiva and Pārvatī, along with Nandi, Kāmadeva, Gaṇeśa, Rāhu, Śani, Kārtikeya, Agni, Brahṃa and other gods and goddesses.

Though Dr. Gupta concentrates mainly on narrating the legends, she has also tried to interpret the legends in her own way. It would have been better if she had mentioned the sources of the legends. Detailed references would certainly help the serious student of Indian mythology.

Mythological stories of a religion serve two purposes. Firstly, they explain abstruse philosophical teachings in a simple way for the common people. Secondly, they give us an idea of the social customs of bygone ages. Unless we keep these two purposes in mind, the legends will appear to us as mere 'stories'. To understand their significance we must have an analytical mind. The Rudra-Śiva cult changed from time to time, and so we find various conceptions of Śiva in different places and times such as the Vedic, Tāntrik, Paurāṇik, and folk-religious conceptions.

We beg to differ with some of the comments

made by Dr. Gupta. In the Vedic period there was no connection of the Śiva-cult with phallic worship. The word *sisnadeva* (*Rg-Veda* 7.21.5, 10.27.19) does not mean Śiva. According to Yāska, *sisnadevah abrahmacharyah* (*Nirukta* 4.19.15). Dr. R. C. Mazumdar (*Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4, pp. 65-66), Prof. Roth (*Muir, Oriental Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 411) and others also are of the same opinion. In Sanskrit *linga* does not always mean the phallus, as we find that *linga-sarīra* means subtle body. In Tantra it is said: *Līyate gamyate yatra yena sarvam carācaram/ Tadeva lingam ityuktam līngatattvapārāyaṇah*. Thus *linga* means a principle, a symbol. In the Vedic Age *yajñāgni* represented all the gods and goddesses, even Rudra (*Rg-Veda* 1.27.10, 1.72.4). Though the small pebbles found at Mohenjodaro—according to Marshall—show evidence of phallic cult, yet we cannot take this interpretation for granted, as neither in the Vedic Age nor during the time of the Kushan kings do we find any trace of this cult. However, in the *Mahābhārata* (*Anusāsana Parva*, 14.226.28) Śiva-linga is mentioned, but it belongs to a later period, perhaps during the Gupta period.

In *Rg-Veda* we find Rudra as one of the great gods who was benevolent to the Ṛṣis (1.114.10), and as a doctor, Rudra Bhiṣak (2.33.7). In the *Yajur-Veda* we find the name 'Śiva' more common (*Śukla Y.V.*, 3.25, 12.17; also see *Rg-Veda* 1.31.1, 10.92.2). The Conception of Rudra came from that of Agni (*Rg-Veda*, 1.27.10). Yāska says: *agnirapi rudra ucyate* (*Nirukta*, 10.7.7). Vedic Śiva's weapon was the bow and arrow (*Rg-Veda* 7.46.1, *Śukla Y.V.*, 16.3); he had a thousand eyes (*S.Y.V.*, 16.13). But in the Paurāṇik Age the trident became Śiva's weapon, the number of eyes was reduced to three only (*Vāmana Purāṇa*, 2.24-25), and he had five faces and ten hands (*Śāradaṭīlaka*, 18.85). In the Tantras we find many forms of Śiva, such as Aghora (*Tantrarāja Tantra*, 26.15), Chanda (*Prapañca-sāra Tantra*, 28.33), Mahākāla (*Prāṇatoṣini Tantra*, 5.6), Vāmadeva (*Tantrarāja Tantra*, 26.15) and others.

In the *Yajur-Veda*, Śiva is even considered the Lord of thieves—*stenānām pataye namo ... taskarāṇām pataye namo ... jighamsadbhyo muṣṇatām pataye namo namo'simadbhyo naktam caradbhya* (*Śukla Y.V.*, 16.20-21). And in the *Atharva-Veda Samhitā* (*Paippalāda Śākhā*, 15th chapter, *Vrātya Kāṇḍa*) we find a god, Ekavrātya by name. It seems, from other sources like the *Vrātyastoma* in the

Tandya-Mahabrahmana and the Jaimini Brahmana, that some nonconformist Aryans along with the Sabaras, Pulindas, Turvasus, Niśādas, and others invented a separate Śiva-cult, and their God was Ekavrātya. Worshippers of Ekavrātya lived like nomads.

In Tamil religious literature we find Karaikkāl Ammaiār (or Devi Punitavati of 550 A.D.) praying to Nilakaṇṭha Śiva who had snakes all around his body, a garland of human skulls, and ornaments made of bones, and who lived in the hearts of the devotees. Chekkidar, Minister of King Kulotunga of Chola Dynasty (1133-50 A.D.) describes Śiva as an effulgent light in whose matted hair are the river Gangā and the half-crescent moon, and whose abode is *cidākāsa*. Similarly we find different Śiva-conceptions in Basavesvara, who accepted only the Nirguṇa aspect of Śiva though he instructed his followers to keep a Śiva-linga always, and in Mallikārjuna who accepted the anthropomorphic form also. Basavesvara enriched Canarese Śaivite literature, and the Mallikārjuna, Telugu Śaivite literature. In the northern part of Tamilnadu, some parts of Mysore and Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and in West Bengal we find the ceremony of Charak and Gājan which is not seen in other parts of India. This ceremony, connected with Śiva-worship, shows the influence of the prehistoric Austric culture. In the Mangal-Kāvyas of Bengali literature Śiva is pictured as a poor householder who is always worried over his financial condition and who ultimately takes to the plough to cultivate his lands (see Śivāyan, *Annadāmangal*, etc.). Thus, though there are local influences on the Śiva-conception, the root is in the Vedas. Śiva as a cultivator, as found in the Bengali literature, was borrowed from the the Śatarudrīya hymn of the *Yajur-Veda* where he was named Kṣetrapati, lord of the lands.,

The book under review bears the stamp of the authoress' versatile genius and hard labour, but we request her to add, in the next edition, some notes on the legends so that a reader may know how the Śiva-cult evolved from time to time. It will also be interesting if she can find out how local trends brought about these changes in the conception of Śiva. As Dr. Gupta is doing researches in Hindu mythology, we request her to explore the inner significance of these legends—how the philosophical aspect of Hinduism is expressed through these legends. A book discussing all these points will be highly appreciated by serious students of Hindu mythology. We thank the publisher also for bringing out such a nice book whose get-up, printing, and photo-

plates are of high quality, though the many broken letters used in the printing could have been avoided.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

REFLECTIONS ON PHILOSOPHY: BY
SHRI S. BALASUNDARAM. Published by Bharatiya
Vidya Bhavan, K.M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty,
Bombay 400 007. 1979. Pp. 124. Rs. 12.

One of the major characteristics of Indian philosophy is that it is grounded in personal experience. Sense-perception, reflection and scriptural testimony become, at times, secondary in spiritual ventures. *Knowledge* of the Ultimate must lead to *experience* of the Ultimate.

The book under review is an attempt of a *sādhaka* and lover of philosophy to formulate his ideas about the goal he is striving towards—happiness. Not unaware of the academic perusals of the philosophical horizons of the East and the West, the author tries to weave together various convictions of his own life and mind. Earlier, while serving in the Telegraph and also in Railway Departments he had dedicated himself to spiritual sciences.

While writing about the greatest mystery of Being, the author notes the distinction between the Not-Being and Non-Being. For him, Absolute Nothing or Not-Being is eternally impossible whereas Non-Being could be conceived of as a possible state of Being. In his discussions regarding the proofs for the existence of Being (or God) he claims to have encountered a new proof in a somewhat original form. This, according to him, should be called the Significant Proof or the Argument from Meaning. The proof is based on the nature of the self and the moral consciousness inherent in it. The awareness of the significance of the evolutions of life and of man, his history and civilization, lead to a point where, for him, reason and faith merge and the conviction is born that the universe has a meaning and is rooted in the Ultimate.

In his discussion of some of the epistemological issues the author correctly comes to the conclusion that human knowledge is incomplete and imperfect and relative. Unless man conceives himself to be one with the Absolute, none of his faculties could reach near the Absolute. The defence of Śankara's philosophy of nondualism by the author in the light of modern science and schools of Western philosophy exhibits a keen mind of a student of Indian philosophy. In his epistemo-

logical treatment of philosophy he discusses the theory of infinite numbers in mathematics and is of the view that the theory is unique because it is not purely conceptual.

The work is a sincere and discerning attempt to reflect upon some of the major issues in philosophy. It is useful for laymen as well as for students of philosophy in clarifying several of the confusing aspects of our thought.

S. P. DUBEY, M.A., Ph.D.
Dept. of Postgraduate Studies
and Research in Philosophy
University of Jabalpur

STORIES AND PARABLES: BY SADGURU SANT KESHAVADAS. Published by Vantage Press, 516 West 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10001. 1979. Pp. 100. \$ 5.95.

The story-teller has played a very important role in the cultural life of all peoples. Especially before books began to be mass produced and literacy spread among all classes, before the coming of the cinema and television, it was the story-teller who excited the imagination of the young, leading them to aspire after greatness. It was the story-teller who drove deep into the minds of people the traditional cultural and religious values. His tales gave people a knowledge of their history, a sense of historical identity and continuity. Through him people learned of their nation's ancient heroes and heroines who thus continued to live in the national unconscious, guiding, admonishing and inspiring the people in the midst of the struggles of their daily life. And certainly not least in importance, as the story-teller would sit in the inn or by the roadside or within the temple precincts in the evening his entertaining tales provided a healthy catharsis for the tensions and negative emotions people had built up during the day.

Mass media in modern times have gone far towards destroying the story-teller's art, especially in the West. But even in a Third World country like India, which has perhaps the richest tradition in this art in the world, the person is rare nowadays who can hold an audience spellbound as the magic of his words brings to life once again the ancient heroes of Bharata. The grandmother who used to sit in the evening and tell her grandchildren of Rama and Krishna, Harischandra and Prahlad, no longer has time or desire to do so. Hence young and old flock to the cinema, read cheap novels, listen to the radio or watch TV and are thereby inspired by ideals which are the

very antithesis of all that the country has stood for during thousands of years.

Thus it is refreshing and encouraging to find that the world does still produce great story-tellers like Sant Keshavadas, who has enthralled audiences in both East and West for many years now. *Stories and Parables* will give the reader a clue to his popularity, for these short tales make their point with clarity, freshness and humour, without any negative moralizing. The collection consists of many independent, short parables and tales and spiritual teachings, the common theme being spirituality. The stories come from such diverse sources as the Upanishads, the Itihasas and Puranas, the lives of the great Maharashtrian saints, and so on, and there are many bits of the author's own spiritual advice. Each has its own message, a message which is planted in the depths of the mind with the help of Keshavadas' mastery of poetic imagery; for it is from the deeper layers of mind that springs mythology, and it is therefore only natural that stories and images affect the mental depths more profoundly than reasoned argument and dialectic. Thus, spiritual aspirants, will find *Stories and Parables* a helpful inspiration.

The attractive appearance of the book is a compliment to the high standards of Vantage Press.,

SWAMI ATMARAUPANANDA
Mayavati

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY: BY SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029. 1980. Pp. 104. Rs. 6.

The book under review is a collection of fifty-two one-page essays originally published under the title 'Observations' in the monthly *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*. The topics, mostly based on the practical aspects of religion and spiritual life, have none of the scriptural and scholastic overtones usual in such works. Any reader unfamiliar with the terminological exactitudes of religion will find this volume surprisingly simple with its down-to-earth approach. Spirituality is not what a man professes or expatiates, but what he is, and what he does even in his most unobserved moments. The fundamental characteristics of a spiritual life have been told in an unassuming way with an unmistakable humility yet firmness. If spirituality means the vision of the same undying spirit in one's own self as also in the world outside, then

these essays have done justice by attempting to present the social dynamics of that spirituality in familiar terms. The prevalent simplicity in style can perhaps be best described by a line from one of these essays: 'He may know much, yet gives the impression as if he knows nothing.' ('Purity', p. 102).

Some of the essays, written with somewhat of the precision and terseness of Bacon—like 'Peace', 'Not me, thou', 'Detachment', 'Be a lamp to yourself', 'Non-violence', 'Goodwill towards All', 'Self-criticism', 'Work is Worship', 'Humility', 'Greatness', 'Prayer' and 'Purity'—could only be written by a man who sought to realize these truths in his own life, and not without paying the high price for such an attempt. Essays like 'Greatness', 'Beware of False Prophets', 'Secular vs. Spiritual' are enlightening. Essays on Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and especially on Holy Mother are expressions of the lifelong experience of a humble servant of God. Some stray sentences like 'Can an unlighted lamp light other lamps?', or 'Man is an alien to himself in the present age,' or 'Purity is a state of being in which you are close to God,' are illuminating in their very simplicity.

Spirituality or religion is simple. We render it complex with our pretensions and pedantry. It is never a Utopian ideal, but is the sustaining force of life itself. It is, as Swamiji says, 'being and becoming'. It can be translated into our day-to-day life and action. It can be lived. Its radiance can be felt in every action of the individual, either in social or private life. It is these feelings that the small volume seeks to drive home. Nevertheless, with all the profundity of its themes, the book is meant for people and not scholars, and here probably lies the excellence of this volume.

Such an edifying book certainly deserves better printing and get-up, which can be done in the next edition.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA
Belur Math

ZEN : DAWN IN THE WEST: BY ROSHI PHILIP KAPLEAU. Published by Rider and Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1980. Pp. xx+311. £3.95.

When Philip Kapleau returned to America after spending thirteen years in Zen Buddhist monasteries in Japan, he was presented with the problem of making a Far Eastern religion a viable and vital force in American life. The result of his effort in this line is a remarkable

hub of spiritual activity in Rochester, New York, known as the Zen Center, started in the mid-sixties. There Westerners—young and old, men and women, monks and laymen—are able to learn for the first time authentic Zen in a setting which is genuinely American, not imitation Japanese. 'What is needed to assimilate Zen Buddhism into Western modes of thinking and feelings?' he asked himself, and answered: 'English chanting versions of basic sutras, distinctive Western dress permitting easy crossing of the legs for zazen, Western-sounding Buddhist names for those who [become] ordained or [take] the precepts, and ceremonies, forms and rituals that are in accord with our Western traditions.' And this cultural translation is just what Roshi Kapleau set about to do. All the more amazing is the fact that in the process he did not produce a watered-down Zen but maintained a high degree of integrity.

Roshi Kapleau's first book, *Three Pilgrims of Zen* (1965), has been one of the primary influences shaping the Zen movement in the West, for it was one of the first books to bring Zen down from the clouds of intellectualism into the field of practical spiritual life. Published as it was at the end of his thirteen years of training in Japanese monasteries, it presented to the West the principles and practical methods of Zen in the words of ancient and modern Japanese masters.

Now, *Zen: Dawn in the West* presents his experience resulting from thirteen years of teaching Zen in the West. Part One contains dialogues in which he answers the doubts and misgivings of Americans inquiring into Zen. Part Two deals with the secluded training period (sesshin)—a highly intensive period of group meditation lasting seven days. It contains the encouragement talks and commentaries on Zen texts given by the Roshi during a seven-day sesshin, and also 'enlightenment accounts' given by some students of the Roshi who experienced an awakening through sesshin. Part Three is entitled 'Devotions' and reveals the religious side of Zen, how it has been adapted to Western cultural needs, and the reactions of Western aspirants to this aspect, together with the Roshi's subtle and illuminating explanations of the need for devotions. In the fourth part, 'Morality and Social Responsibility', Roshi Kapleau shows the falsity of the commonly held idea that Zen fosters immorality, selfishness and irresponsibility, by explaining how a person undergoing Zen training grows in purity, compassion

and a feeling of responsibility towards the whole universe. The Afterword gives a brief sketch of the author's own spiritual search.

In going through the 'enlightenment accounts' (referred to above) from aspirants who had been leading ordinary lives in the world, readers may form the impression that Zen enlightenment is very cheap. This would be a mistake. In the phrase 'enlightenment account', 'enlightenment' is a translation of the Japanese 'kensho', which the glossary of the book defines as '... a first awakening, usually shallow.' Kensho is not the same as the deeper experience of satori. Through the intensive training received during sesshin some people are raised to a higher level of perception, temporarily transcending their habitual fears and compulsions—this is kensho, but it is very far from perfection. One familiar with classical Zen literature will know that the ultimate enlightenment is won by Zen aspirants with as much sacrifice as by the followers of other traditions; and Roshi Kapleau says as much elsewhere in the book. Confusion would have been avoided, however, had the word 'enlightenment' been qualified in some way.

Because it consists largely of question-answer dialogues, letters, and talks given by the Roshi on various subjects at various times, the book is not meant to be a systematic exposition of Zen. Yet it is 'alive' with a life which is not found in

didactic texts. The reviewer who has read a number of books on the subject, puts this volume down with the feeling that it is one of the most captivating and satisfying presentations of Zen he has come across. As the Roshi says in the Preface, 'Few books on Zen give adequate expression to the significance of devotions and rituals, which are indispensable ingredients of spiritual training. An attempt is made here to fill this lacuna ...' He has succeeded, and this has given the book a rare balance and depth. Finally, mention must be made of the fact that Roshi Kapleau knows not only the limitation of words but also their uses—he isn't afraid to give verbal explanations when such are called for—and thus he avoids mystification for the mere sake of confusing the readers, a dubious practice which has been perfected by the popularizers of 'intellectual Zen'.

Zen: Dawn in the West will appeal not only to the student of Zen—neophyte or advanced—but also to anyone interested in religious psychology and experience in general. It will be of especial interest and value to the followers of the Ramakrishna Movement who are involved in adapting Vedanta to foreign cultures, for here will be found one man's heroic and successful attempt to do the same with Zen Buddhism.

WAMI ATMARUPANANDA

Mayavati

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA MONASTERY AND RETREAT

GANGES, MICHIGAN, U.S.A.

REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 1979 TO AUGUST 1980

Started in 1968 in rural Michigan as a branch of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, this institution has been developing full ashrama and conference facilities through the past twelve years. Having until recently one hundred acres of land, the Centre purchased six more acres across the road from the monastery to extend the retreat facilities. Besides the existing cottage on the new land, three prefab log-cabins were erected during the year for retreatants.

During the first two weeks of July 1980, an experimental children's retreat was held at the monastery with the help of several devotees. The first week was for children aged 7-10, the second for children 11-14. They were instructed

in retreat discipline, crafts and games, and yogic asanas. Swamis of the monastery gave spiritual classes throughout the two-week period. The experiment was quite successful, and more such retreats are planned for the future.

Sunday services were given by the Swamis in the auditorium at 11 a.m. During the warm months of the year, the museum was open to the public, exhibiting arts, crafts, and other materials from India. A larger building is under construction to house the expanding exhibits.

The year under review ended with the Annual Festival and Retreat, held on August 1, 2, and 3. By the 2nd, the crowd had swelled to nearly 400, including people from various parts of the United States and Canada. Guest speakers were Swami Ranganathananda (Hyderabad), Swami Sarvagat-ananda (Boston), Swami Nihareyananda (Central and South Africa), and Rev. Garth Lehman of the Church of Christ, Indianapolis.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Cooperatives in India

The All-India Cooperative Week observed in February may not have attracted the wide attention which it certainly deserved. In recent years 'cooperation' has lost much of the idealistic glamour that it had during the early years after Independence. The present approach is more realistic and matter-of-fact. It is attempted only in areas where nothing else will work.

Of the three basic economic activities of man—production, distribution and consumption—self-interest and inadequate social awareness make cooperation almost impossible in the field of production. This is especially so in Agriculture. Except in Israel and communist countries, cooperation in agricultural production has failed almost everywhere. In India cooperative farming never became successful and has been abandoned. The ambitious collective farming attempted by the Government of Kerala also proved to be a fiasco.

It is only in the field of distribution that cooperatives are necessary and have achieved success. The highly successful milk producers' cooperatives, handloom weavers' cooperatives and consumers' cooperatives are all really distribution societies.

At present the activities of cooperatives in India fall into four categories: 1. credit, 2. marketing, 3. consumer, and 4. processing and allied activities. In spite of nationalization of banking there is great demand for credit in rural areas, and this is being partially met by Cooperative Banks and Land Development Banks. In the field of marketing, a network of Primary Cooperative Societies and District Cooperative Federations are helping the Government in the procurement of food grains for buffer stock, and the farmers in getting farm inputs like fertilizer, improved seed, pesticides, etc. If properly managed, marketing cooperatives could supply all the consumer needs of the village. But it is for perishable commodities like fruit (bananas, apples) and vegetables (especially potatoes) that cooperative marketing is urgently needed now.

The importance of consumer cooperatives in cities and towns can hardly be overemphasized. At present the few department stores run by cooperatives hardly cover a small fraction of urban population. Consumer cooperatives can play a vital role in holding the price line and in checking black markets.

Poverty and unemployment in rural areas can also be considerably reduced by developing village industries on a cooperative foundation and making cooperatives the main support of village economy. Perhaps the only sane solution to many of the economic problems of the country is to expand the cooperative movement in a big way. At all events, the ideal of cooperation must be reestablished in national life.
